

Some Things I Have Learnt in 50 Years Part 2

by Zac Poonen

The secret to holiness is dependence on Jesus, who is the author of our faith and the example of how to live a holy life.

Duration: 57:24

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon shares truths learned over 50 years, emphasizing the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit continuously. It highlights the need to thirst for the Spirit and believe in receiving it, focusing on living a life immersed in the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and fulfill God's calling.

Transcript

In the last session in service, I started a series titled Some Truths I've Learned in 50 Years. And I thought I should share that because this year has been special for me for two reasons. I completed 70 years last week.

And I feel like I'm only about 30 years inside. And I was converted when I was around 20, so I also completed 50 years this year as a believer. And in these 50 years, as I've studied the scriptures and I've sought to walk with the Lord, there are a number of lessons that I have learned.

And a lot of them have solved a lot of problems in my life. And I thought it would be appropriate in the four sessions this weekend to share those lessons. There were 16 of them altogether.

I finished four in the last session. I spoke on these four. First of all, God loves Jesus' disciples as much as He loved Jesus.

And second, God delights in honest people. And third, God delights in cheerful givers. And fourth, we must treat every human being with dignity.

Now, I'm not going to repeat all that because I've got four more to say in this session. But those CDs are available, and you can listen to them. So I want to go on to number five, another of those lessons that I've learned.

Holiness comes by looking unto Jesus. We know that right from the Old Testament through the New Testament, the word of God is, be holy, for I am holy. And I think every Christian will acknowledge that God wants us to be holy.

And also, almost every Christian will acknowledge that they're not as holy as they are, as they should be. And many Christians, though they are afraid to acknowledge it, if they're honest, would say, I really don't know how to be holy. Most Christians I've met, when they hear a word about holiness, they really want to be that, and they struggle.

And they don't realize that they're trying to accomplish what God wants in their life exactly the way the Israelites tried to keep the law for 1,500 years and failed. And it was true in my life, too. For years, I was defeated.

I was born again, and for 16 years after I was born again, I was sure I was going to heaven. My sins were all forgiven, but I was constantly defeated. I read every book that I could pick up on holiness, and there were so many theories and this, that, and the other.

I hardly ever met a godly person who would sit down and explain to me, how exactly can I be free from sin in my life? How exactly can I get out of this merry-go-round of sinning and confessing and sinning again in the same area and confessing and going round and round and round, this vicious circle? But as I looked into the scriptures, I found it is in exactly the same way as I got forgiveness of sins. How do we get forgiveness of sins? Every religion in the world teaches that we've got to work and do something, maybe give money to God or go on sacrifices or afflict our body in some way. It's a mark of false religion.

Salvation by works. You do this, that, and the other, and somehow God will forgive your past sins. But we know that that's not the way.

How did we get forgiveness? If you really got forgiveness of sins, true forgiveness of sins, the only way you would have got it is like we sing in that song, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. That's how I got forgiveness. I said, Lord, I cannot do a single thing to get forgiveness of even one sin in my life.

I come empty-handed and believe that Jesus hung on that cross and paid the price for all my sins, took the punishment that I deserve, and I simply receive that, believe that he rose from the dead and is living and received him as my Lord, and I was forgiven. What did I do? I looked unto Jesus on the cross as my substitute and my Savior, and I was forgiven. Now, it's exactly the same way that we have to live our whole Christian life, looking unto Jesus.

Hebrews chapter 12, that's the verse I want to go to to emphasize this point. Hebrews in chapter 12, he's talking about the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament here. Hebrews 11 is full of these wonderful men of God who lived by faith in the Old Testament, but it was mainly a faith for external things, for external miracles like Abraham and Sarah having faith for a baby when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, and faith to split the Red Sea and pull down the walls of Jericho and shut the mouths of lions and all that.

But then it comes to the New Testament, and it says in chapter 12, Hebrews 12, verse 1 and 2, that for us, the author of our faith, verse 2, is not Abraham. It's not Elijah. It's not Moses.

None of these people listed in chapter 11. It's Jesus. He's the author of our faith, and so it says, let us run this race looking unto Jesus.

And the meaning there is looking away from everyone else and from everything else unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down in the right hand of the throne of God. So the Christian life is pictured like a race, a race in which Jesus already went in front of us, and we've got to look for his footsteps and walk in those footsteps. That's why there's a title given to Jesus in the book of Hebrews, which most Christians are unfamiliar with.

Many of you have heard of Jesus as savior, good shepherd, the way, the truth, and the life, Lord, the door, et cetera. How many of you have heard of Jesus as forerunner? That's a title found in Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 20. Forerunner, one who ran a race in front of us, calling us to walk in the same way.

He is not asking us to go along a way that he didn't go himself. And we know that the scripture says that Jesus never sinned. But the scripture also says in the same book of Hebrews 4.15 that he was tempted like us and did not sin.

And that is the race that he ran. He was tempted, and he didn't sin. That is the secret of holiness.

The way he lived on Earth and never sinned is the way I can live on Earth and overcome sin. So if I look at Jesus as my example, that's the meaning here. Just like I looked at Jesus once as my substitute and the one who died for me on the cross, that's how I began my Christian life.

And now I continue my Christian life, running this race, looking unto Jesus. To me, that is one of the definitions of faith, would be looking unto Jesus and not unto myself. If we look unto ourselves, we'll be depressed.

We look unto Jesus and see, what are we to see? It says here in verse 2, who endured the cross, despising the shame, and he sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. He never sinned in his earthly life. And by dependence upon him, trusting him, we can be holy.

It says in 1 Timothy in chapter 3 and verse 16, 1 Timothy 3.16, by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness, or as the Living Bible paraphrases it, it's quite true that it's not an easy thing to live a godly life. There is a secret to it. Mystery means secret.

There's a secret of living a godly life. What is it? And it says, it is in seeing that Jesus Christ came to earth in our flesh and was pure in his spirit. Great is the mystery of godliness.

He was revealed in the flesh and was vindicated or righteous in his spirit. Many of us have looked to Jesus as our substitute on the cross for dying for us and saving us from the judgment of God, but we have not seen him as our example who lived on earth exactly like we and tempted like us and never sinned. And that's why it says in Hebrews chapter 12 that we'll look unto Jesus.

First of all, as the one who was tempted exactly like us and never sinned. And secondly, it says in Hebrews 12 and verse two, who is now at the right hand of the throne of God. I have to look at Jesus as the way he lived on this earth and now at the right hand of the father, ready to help me in my moment of temptation.

I wanna show you another verse in this connection and that's Hebrews 4 and 16. For many years, I never understood the difference between mercy and grace. I thought they were the same.

And I think most Christians also think they are the same, but they're not. Mercy is an old Testament word and grace is a new Testament word. And they're two completely different things.

Mercy relates more to forgiveness of sins. Grace relates more to power to overcome sin. Romans 6, 14 says, sin will not rule over you when you're under grace, not when you're under mercy.

So in Hebrews 4, 16, it says, let us draw near to confidence to the throne of grace that we may first of all receive mercy. And that's what we all need, mercy. Because we've all sinned.

Now Jesus didn't need mercy because he never sinned. But then after we receive mercy, it says in this verse that we might find grace. After we have received mercy, we got to find grace.

For what? To help us in our time of need. And that time of need is what is mentioned in the previous verse, time of temptation. When we're tempted, when we're tempted to sin, that's our time of need.

Lord, I'm about to fall now. I need grace. And it says when we come to God, we can get grace to help us in our time of need.

Now many of us may not realize that Jesus also needed grace to overcome sin. Now that's, I never knew it myself till I studied scripture more carefully and discovered. This is what it means to look unto Jesus, to see that when he lived on this earth, he did not live as God, even though he was God.

He was God, that's why he could receive worship. God can never cease to be God. He was the second person of the Trinity.

But he never used his resources as God when he was on earth. He never, though he was God, he never used it because if he used his resources as God, he could not be an example for us. And so we read in Luke chapter two that from the time of his birth, this is the amazing thing that I discovered after many years of being a Christian and being defeated, which opened the way for me to enter into a life of victory.

Looking unto Jesus, Luke chapter two, verse 40. It says about Jesus, the child continued to grow and become strong, increasing, this is talking about Jesus, read slowly and carefully, increasing in wisdom and the grace of God was upon him. The grace of God was upon Jesus.

Now what happens when the grace of God is upon a person? Romans 6, 14 says that. Sin will not rule over you when you are under grace. So when Jesus was under grace, sin could not rule over him.

The grace of God was upon him. Now I wanna show you another verse as to how Jesus ended his life on the cross. Hebrews in chapter two, it says in Hebrews chapter two and verse nine, we know that Jesus tasted death for all of us, but how did he manage to go all that way to that difficult death on the cross? That wasn't easy.

It says here in Hebrews 2, nine, we see him who was made lower than the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God, again, it was by the help he got from the grace of God that he tasted death for everyone. So how did he manage to go through that difficult trial of the cross? By the grace of God. What did we see in Luke chapter two? He began as a child with the grace of God.

Here we read he ended his life by the grace of God. So what I see is that all through Jesus' life, what he accomplished, he accomplished as a man under the grace of God. Great.

Then I have an example. Because it's the same grace that God today offers me through the Holy Spirit. And because most of the Christian world has misunderstood grace as though it meant unmerited favor, that's not what it means.

Because unmerited favor, people have had right from the beginning of time. Human history. Everybody got unmerited favor from God and every unbeliever in the world gets unmerited favor from God today.

But they don't have grace. Because if they had grace, the proof of receiving, of being under grace is Romans 6, 14. Sin does not rule over you.

You become holy. Holiness does not come through struggle. The Christian message is not a self-improvement program.

It is the grace of God working in me, helping me, making me holy. It's the grace of God. Or as it says in another verse, in Romans chapter eight and verse three, verse two, sorry.

Romans eight, verse two. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. Here was a man subject to the same law of sin and death that you and I are subject to, the Apostle Paul.

And he said, something set me free from it. I became holy. There was another power that set me free from that power.

The law of sin and death is like the law of gravity. When it says Jesus was tempted, he was tempted like us. Temptation drew him, but he never sinned because he was under grace.

Now the same power is available for us also to overcome. The life that he had, he offers me. And that's the meaning of this verse.

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. To use an illustration, the law of sin and death is like the law of gravity, always pulling us down. As long as we live on this earth, sin will keep on pulling us down.

And I wanna say that Jesus was tempted. He was tempted to sin, but he didn't. And there is no temptation if you're not attracted to something.

We know we're attracted to something and we know it's wrong. And God wants to give us the power to overcome that. He doesn't make us holy by taking away that attraction.

No, we'd never be holy then. It's when we overcome that attraction by the grace of God that we become holy. This is why Adam had to be tempted.

You know that God can never make a man holy unless he makes a choice. If God could have made Adam holy without Adam's choice, God would have made him holy from day one, but he couldn't do it. He had to make him and then give him freedom of choice and send him into a garden where he'd be tempted, attracted to something very attractive.

And if he rejected it, he could become holy. That is the way of holiness. That's why God permits temptation.

And Jesus is our example there who was tempted in every point and he overcame. And it says here in Romans 8 too that this law of the spirit, which is life in Christ Jesus, set Paul free from the law of sin and death. So like we read in Hebrews 4, in the moment of temptation, we have to come to the throne of grace and say, God, give me grace.

I cannot overcome this on my own. Faith is dependence upon the Lord. Say, Lord, I want to look to you for help to help me overcome.

This is the fifth truth I learned in these years and I tell you it works. And if you don't believe it, let me give you a little bit of homework. The next time you're tempted with whatever is your primary, the area where you're being defeated most of the time, whether it's internet pornography, lusting after women, whether it's anger, whatever is the area where you find yourself frequently falling or somebody you just can't forgive, this bitter, unforgiving spirit that always seems to pull you down.

You resist it and you find that after some time you can't resist it. You're about to fall to lust or anger or bitterness or whatever it is. Will you pray at that moment and say, God, please give me grace.

I'm about to fall. Something like Peter, when he was about to sink in the sea, walking on the water, he said, Lord, save me. And it says Jesus stretched out his hand and held him that he didn't sink.

And you try that. Come to the throne of grace and say, Lord, save me now. Save me.

I don't want to do this. I don't want to fall into this sin. And you'll find that just like the Lord held Peter, he will hold you too.

And you'll be surprised. Hey, how did I overcome that? That was by looking unto Jesus. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus lifted you up from the law of sin.

And after a while, this can become a habit with you. In the beginning, it's just like learning swimming. It takes a while to learn to float, but after a while you enjoy it.

And it becomes so easy. This is the Christian life. The sixth thing that I have learned leads on from this, that the way of the cross is the way of life.

Now the message of the cross, I don't mean the cross on which Jesus died. That's proclaimed everywhere in Christendom. But the cross with Jesus said we must take every day in order to be his disciple.

If anyone will come up to me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Do you know that's the only thing that Jesus ever said we got to do daily? He never told us to read the Bible daily. It's a very good habit to read the Bible daily.

I think it helps us. But the one thing, you can take a concordance if you like and look up the word daily in the New Testament and the gospels and you'll find the only thing Jesus said you got to do every single day of your life is to take up the cross. Now when I was a young Christian, I was told to pray every day and to read the Bible every day.

All good habits. To seek for fellowship with someone every day and to witness to somebody every day. All four excellent things.

And the one thing nobody ever told me was to take up my cross every day. Which is the only thing that Jesus said we got to do every day. And that's why I never understood the way of life.

And I think I'm right in saying that most Christians don't have a clue about what it means to take up the cross every day. And that's the reason for their problems. What does it mean to take up the cross? In the days when Jesus lived on the earth, if you saw somebody, anybody carrying a cross, it was a very common sight in those days to see the Roman soldiers taking a criminal to be crucified.

And if you saw a man carrying a cross down the street, you know where he was going. He was going to be killed. He was going to die.

He had said goodbye to everything on this earth. And he was going to die. And what Jesus was saying there is if you really want to follow me, you have to say goodbye to a lot of things on this earth.

You've got to die. You've got to die to your ambitions. You think of this man who's going to the cross now.

He doesn't have any more plans for the future. He's finished. Maybe he did have plans for the future, but they're all gone.

He's going to death. He's not going for a picnic. He's going to die.

And Jesus said, if you want to follow me, you've got to die to everything that you had planned for yourself. And now, it doesn't mean we live like zombies without any plans. Paul said, I am crucified, but someone else lives in me now.

Christ lives in me. This is the Christian life. It's an exchange life where I give up my plans and I say, Lord, what are yours? I die.

What is the cross I have to take up every day? To die to my own plans, to my own hurt feelings, to my reputation, to my feeling injured the way somebody spoke to me or treated me. There's a beautiful verse in Romans chapter six. This is so important.

I remember when I was seeking God for the power of the Holy Spirit when I was about 23 years old, I felt there was something in the Christian life I had missed. I was born again. I was baptized in water.

I was a regular church attender. I'd given up whatever I knew was sin in those days, which was mostly external things. And yet, there was something missing in my life.

And as I sought God, I said, Lord, I want to know what the power of the Holy Spirit is in my life. The Lord showed me how Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit when he went into the waters of baptism. And the waters of baptism symbolized death to self.

He was allowing somebody else to push him into the water, a picture of allowing other people to crucify him. And when John the Baptist raised him up from the water, it was symbolic of God raising him up from the dead. So that Jesus was accepting the way of the cross there in baptism.

It was a symbol of his having accepted the way of the cross for 30 years already. Death to self so that God would give him power to live the life he's supposed to live. That's the way I'm supposed to go to.

So, here is the verse I'm talking about. Romans 6 and verse 11. Consider yourself or reckon yourself to be dead to sin, but alive unto God.

Now here is something where in a situation where I'm tempted or I'm provoked, I have to come to this verse and say, Lord, you've asked me to consider myself dead here. How would a dead man react to this situation? Say somebody insulted you. I come to Romans 6, 11.

Lord, you've asked me to take up the cross. We have ample opportunities to take up the cross every day, I'll tell you that. Consider yourself dead.

How would this dead man react if somebody said he was stupid or he was an idiot? There wouldn't even be a change of his expression. Imagine coming to a life where you're completely unaffected because you have chosen the way of the cross, the way of life, you choose to reckon yourself dead. Now it looks as if if we live like that, people will take advantage of us.

That's the fear many people have. That's where we've got to believe that God has said, he's a promise of his in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13. He will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability.

Now, if there were no promise like that, 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13, it would be very dangerous to reckon yourself dead. People would be taking advantage of you all the time. But God is watching the whole thing.

He's promised that you will never face a situation where you won't be able to bear it. I'll make a way for you to do it. And the promises, if I die with him, I will live with him.

That's the promise. You know, Jesus was willing to go to the death because he knew there'd be a resurrection. And it's because we don't believe that God will raise us up.

I mean, when you go into the waters of baptism, supposing you felt that this man who's baptizing you may never bring you up out of the water, I don't think you'd be baptized. We wouldn't let an enemy baptize us, no. Because he may put us in and keep us there.

So why do you submit, for example, all of you who've been baptized, why did you submit to somebody pushing you underwater? Because he knew he'd pull you up. Now, there's a symbolism here. I'm willing to go into death because I believe that God will raise me up.

I will experience a resurrection if I'm willing to go into the cross, the way of the cross. Now, if that faith were not there, it'd be very difficult to go the way of the cross. If we die with him, the Bible says we shall live with him.

When I say it is no longer I, then Christ lives in me. And we don't experience Christ living in us because I'm hesitant to go down to that death. Somebody robs me of my rights or insults me and I'm unwilling to die.

I want to react like the children of Adam react. And the result is after many, many years, I never experienced what Paul calls the power of his resurrection. God's will is that we experience the power of God lifting us up every day.

If I choose the way of the cross, God will definitely lead me into the power of his resurrection. And that is why we choose the way of the cross. Reckon yourself dead.

Anyway, for me, it was a tremendous liberation when I discovered this. And the Lord spoke to me way back in 1963. That's nearly 46 years ago.

From the example of Jesus choosing that way in his baptism when I was seeking for the power of the spirit. And the Lord said, as long as you choose this way in your life, you'll have my power resting upon you. But the day you move away from the way of the cross, you will lose my power as well.

And I discovered that the reason why so many Christians do not have power, either in their life or in their ministry. They're defeated perpetually by the same old sins year after year after year because they don't believe that if they go down into death, God will raise them up. So I want to encourage you to believe that if you die with him, like it says in 2 Timothy 2, verse 11, if we die with him, we shall live with him.

That's a promise. 2 Timothy 2, 11. If we die with him, we shall live with him.

And we can also say that if I'm not willing to die with him, I shall not live with him. Then I want to go to number seven. The seventh truth that I've learned, which has also been a liberating truth, is that this world's opinions of us are all fit for the trash can.

The opinions of everybody in the world is just fit for the trash can. If somebody's opinion disturbs you, you'll never be able to follow Jesus. How much does that person know about you in any case? Maybe he's criticizing you because he's angry.

Maybe he's criticizing you because he's jealous. There could be many reasons. But their opinions are fit for the trash can.

And the same applies to somebody who praises you. You see, you know that, for example, if 10,000 people called you an angel, would you become an angel? No. If 10,000 people said you're a holy person, would you become a holy person? No, we know that.

And if 10,000 people called you a devil, would you become a devil? No. Why do these things disturb us so much then? Why are we disturbed when we heard that somebody said something bad about us? I remember hearing a saint of God saying, well, if they really knew the truth about me, they'd say something worse than what they actually said. Isn't that true? You know, many times people kneel down before God and say, oh God, I'm such a wretched sinner.

But the next day, if they heard somebody call them a wretched sinner, they'd be really disturbed. Which shows that even in our prayer, we're just using pious words. We don't really believe we are wretched sinners.

Because we wouldn't let anybody else refer to us like that. The opinions of people are fit for the trash can because in the final day, God is gonna judge us by what he sees inside. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians in chapter 4 and verse 5, don't go on passing judgment before the time, but wait till the Lord comes.

Because when he comes, he will bring to light the things hidden in the darkness. I'm sure all of us have had the experience where we did something with a good motive and it was misunderstood. You said something with a good motive and it was misunderstood.

Maybe by your husband or wife or neighbor or brother or sister, someone. And you say, boy, why did they suspect me of that? I never had that intention. God is not gonna judge you the way human beings judge you.

He says he sees the intention of the heart. And God's judgments are always very kind. In Isaiah chapter 2, I'll tell you, this is the verse that helped me.

When I started preaching, I was about 22, 23 years old when I started preaching God's word. And like every young person, I had a tremendous fear about standing before people. And I was nervous and I wanted to impress them.

I was not a public speaker. I'd never taken part in such competitions in school or college or anywhere. I was nervous when I stood before people.

And there was this tremendous desire to, like with all young preachers, to impress people. And it inhibited me and limited me. And then I got this verse one day, Isaiah chapter 2 and verse 22.

For me anyway, I don't know if that helps you, but it was an absolutely liberating verse for me. Isaiah chapter 2 and verse 22, where God says, stop regarding man whose breath of life is in his nostrils, for why should he be esteemed? And I'll tell you how it liberated me. The Lord, from this verse, the Lord was saying, every man, he's alive only because he's got breath in his nostrils.

The moment I take away that breath, he becomes dust. He's dust. And we know that.

When a man's breath is taken away, in a little while he becomes dust. So what the Lord said to me was, when you're speaking to people, just imagine the little piles of dust in front of you. I mean, they've got a little breath in their nostrils, that's why they move around and talk and all that, but they're really only dust.

Dust of different colors sitting there in front of you. And I'll tell you, it really liberated me. I said, Lord, that's all they are.

Am I gonna be worried just because they got a little breath in their nostrils? And here's Almighty God, whose representative I am standing there speaking to them. It's only his opinion that matters. It was so liberating.

And I discovered through the years that it doesn't like everything else I say. It's like learning swimming or any other thing. It takes time.

And after a while, it becomes a habit. Say, Lord, I really want to please you. I want to impress you and not people.

And that applies to many other areas. If you're saying, Lord, in my life, I'm not really concerned whether other people are impressed with my life or not. I want to please you, I want to live before you.

I remember the times when I had to pray in public. You know, like many times in a prayer meeting, could be five people or 10 people or a church meeting. And I would pray.

And I was so conscious that people were listening to my prayer. And I would pray in a way that would impress them. And I would feel excited if somebody said an amen or a hallelujah.

And I think we're all like that. And I would come home and I say, Lord, I didn't pray that prayer to you at all. It was just plain hypocrisy.

I was praying to impress everybody. It's a sort of formal thing to do in a meeting, to pray. And I prayed.

And I'm not surprised it was not answered. I wouldn't even know if the answer had come because I don't even know what I prayed. I was just, I was asked to pray and I just prayed something.

And you know, the thing is, we all do it, but if you don't go home and judge yourself for that, you'll never be free from it. You'll pray like that even after 50 years. But I used to go home and say, Lord, I want to break free from this.

When I pray, I want to pray in a public meeting exactly like I would pray when I'm on my knees alone with you beside my bed or anywhere, where there's nobody listening but you and me. That's the way I want to pray when I'm in public. But it was a battle.

It was a battle. It was a battle for many years before I could pray in public, not be bothered with who is listening or who is not listening or whether people were impressed by my prayer or not impressed by my prayer, because it's only, I was praying to God in any case. I wasn't talking to these people.

These are little areas where if you're honest with yourself, you will see how much, even in our holiest activities, we're seeking to impress people. When you try to impress people, it's like a chain that pulls you down, and you try to run as fast as you can. You're not gonna make any progress.

You're gonna run in the same spot, because this chain is pulling you back. We need to break with it. We need to say the opinions of men are fit for the trash can.

What does it matter if that fellow was not impressed by my prayer? I was praying to God in any case. I wasn't praying to him, and that's just one area. Or something else.

You know, every time I speak, I always, I mean, I've done this for all these more than 45 years that I've been preaching. I'd go home and ask myself, Lord, ask the Lord, Lord, is there something I said which is not to help people but only to impress them? I wanna cleanse myself. The way to be free from the opinions of people is to be honest and acknowledge to God that in different situations, you did seek man's approval.

You said this to impress people. Say, Lord, I wanna impress you. The wonderful thing is, when we get liberated from this, man's opinion will stop bothering us.

Man's opinion is like a chain. I'll tell you this. It's a chain that drags most believers back from going on to their full purpose with God.

And you perhaps don't realize how much of your Christian life has been hindered because you're worried about what people say about you or think about you. So you need to understand what the Bible says. Stop regarding man.

His breath is in his nostrils. Why are you bothered about his opinion, God says. And I compare that with the words that God the Father spoke about Jesus.

At the baptism, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. And what had Jesus done for 30 years that pleased the Father so much? He hadn't done a miracle. He hadn't cast out a demon.

He hadn't preached a sermon. He hadn't healed any sick person. He had done nothing of what we call ministry.

All he had done was obey Joseph and Mary at home, be kind and good to his four younger brothers and sisters, and maybe made good stools and tables and benches in his carpentry shop. The Father was well pleased with him. For what reason? We think that it's only some great man of God who goes around preaching here and there with whom the Father is well pleased.

Well, Jesus has proved that to be a lie because at the end of 30 years without having traveled the world, just living in Nazareth all the time and doing an ordinary, simple job as a carpenter and never preaching a sermon, never doing any miracles, the Father said, I'm pleased with him. What was it that pleased the Father? That in everything that Jesus did in those 30 years, he only sought the approval of his Father. He once said, I always do the things that please him.

Make that your example. Say, Lord, I wanna get to that place, even if it takes me 10 years. Sometimes I pray like this.

I'd say, Lord, if it takes me 10 years to get there, I'm gonna get there. You know, you can listen to this and say, well, from tomorrow onwards, I'm not gonna care about man's opinion. It won't disappear in one day.

It may take 10 years for you to get there, but what I say is don't give up. Don't give up. Every time you find yourself being disturbed by somebody's opinion or being offended by what somebody said or being exalted by somebody's praise.

I remember the Lord speaking to me and saying, I want to bring you to the place where the criticism of men will not even produce a flutter in your heart. Even a feather in your heart won't shake. And then, what is more difficult, that the praise of men will also not bring a flutter in your heart.

Then you have really become free from the opinions of men. Now, the importance of this is because of this one verse, Galatians chapter one and verse 10. I found in myself a tremendous passion to be a true servant of Jesus Christ.

And as I looked around in the church and the world I lived in as a young man, I found very few people, almost nobody, I could say, whom I could look up to as a real man of God, whom I could say, there's a true servant of Christ, a truly humble, godly man, anointed, powerful in the Holy Spirit, hardly anybody. And I think that's true in most places. But I had a tremendous desire to be a servant of Christ myself as a young man.

And I read this verse in Galatians one, verse 10, where it says in the last part, if I'm trying to please men, I can never be a servant of Christ. And I wrote that on a little wooden plaque and I've kept it in the front room of my house for many years. And I looked at it and looked at it and looked at it.

If I seek to please men, I can never be the servant of Christ. It drilled into my head. Do you wanna be a servant of Christ? Never seek to please men.

Seek to please only the Lord. Be conscious of the Lord watching you. I often used to think sometimes when I'm preaching that Jesus is sitting there in the front chair and he's listening.

Imagine if Jesus were physically sitting there. I really wouldn't be bothered about what any of you thought about my sermon, but I'd be pretty concerned about the way he was looking at me when I was saying something. And I said, Lord, it's true.

We say that you're here with two or three are gathered together on the midst, but we don't even recognize his presence. We really need to break free from this. I believe it's one of the major areas where we need to be free to recognize that the opinion of men counts for nothing with God.

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ, God's not gonna ask a single person in the world, what did you think of Zach? He doesn't need anybody's recommendation. He doesn't need anybody's opinion. Remember that.

I used to often picture myself, we've used our imagination for all types of filthy things in the past. And I said, why don't we use our imagination for some good things now? And I used to sometimes imagine that Christ has come and he set up his judgment throne, his throne of judgment. And one by one, people are being called to stand before him.

And then my name comes up and I stand before him. And I would imagine him judging my whole life. And I would discover that all the opinions of men, good or bad, would mean nothing to him at that time.

Because he could see me through and through. And I would practice this. Lord, I'm standing before you.

And you know, just like you rehearse for an examination or an interview or something like that, this is the most important thing that's gonna happen in the final day when we stand before him. And it helped me so much to be free from the opinion of men. I've discovered, I mean, if you don't know it now, you'll discover when Christ comes again, that the opinions of all men, all the good things people said about you and all the bad things people said about you is fit for the trash can.

I'd say that with one qualification. And that is, if it is a really godly man who gave you an opinion about yourself, I would take that a little seriously. Because that man would probably be expressing the mind of God.

For example, if the apostle Paul was living somewhere here, and he told me something about myself, that I would take seriously. Because that was a man who's walking close to God. And he's not just criticizing me or praising me.

He's telling me something to really help me see myself. That's the only qualification I'd make for that. And then I come to the eighth point, which is we must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5. This is the other thing I learned in my life. That it's not enough to be filled with the Holy Spirit once. I believe this is the big mistake that a lot of people have made.

They speak about a certain time in their life when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit or filled with the Holy Spirit. I believe we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. I believe we must be filled with the Spirit continuously.

And I discovered that the word baptism, it's a sort of a mysterious word. And as I read more about it, I discovered that baptism was not an English word at all. And that's why it sounded so mysterious.

It's not an English word. It's a Greek word. And if you were living in Greece 2000 years ago, and you heard about somebody baptizing his hand, that wouldn't be strange.

It just means he dipped his hand in water or something like that. All it meant was immerse. That's the Greek meaning of that word.

Baptism means immerse. So when it says about baptism in water, it means immersion in water. Jesus said, go and immerse people in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The other way to be immersed is if you were standing under the Niagara Falls, for example, you'd be thoroughly immersed. And this is how we are immersed in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's pictured in the Bible like a river coming from the throne of God, falling all the way down to earth.

What a mighty waterfall that is. And I come and stand under that, and I'm baptized in the Holy Spirit, immersed in the Holy Spirit. But I need to remain there.

I can move away from there, and then I'm no longer immersed in the Holy Spirit. I'm no longer filled with the Holy Spirit. So the mistake that a lot of people made is way back there in 1985, I was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Maybe you were. It's like saying, I filled the gas tank in my car in 1985. Maybe you did.

Well, why isn't your car moving today? I need to be filled again and again. And that's the meaning of Ephesians 5, 18. Be, the real word is be being filled or be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.

And I want to say to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Holy Spirit, first of all, let me turn to John chapter seven. Jesus told us the conditions for it.

In John seven, verse 37 to 39. He said, there are only two conditions. You must thirst for it.

And you must believe that Jesus will do it for you. That's all. Now, if you don't have a thirst, if you don't have a desperate thirst to be filled with the Holy Spirit, I can tell you right now, you won't be filled with the Holy Spirit.

If any man is thirsty, let him come to me. Thirsty, so desperately thirsty saying, Lord, I can't live without this. I can't really live the Christian life without the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's like these bulbs saying, I can't burn unless you give me electricity. Give me electricity and I'll burn. But without electricity, I can't burn.

It's just like that. Lord, I can't live this life without the Holy Spirit. I mean, I can hear all these truths about holiness come by looking unto Jesus and the way of the cross and the way of life, the opinions of men who fit for the trash can, all that.

But how to live that life? I need a power. And that's the power of the Holy Spirit. Have you noticed in the Sermon on the Mount? If you've taken the Sermon on the Mount seriously and you read Matthew five, six, and seven, what conclusion do you come to at the end of that reading those three chapters? I remember someone telling me, Brother Zach, this Sermon on the Mount, it's impossible to live like, it's so difficult to live like this.

I said, no, it's not difficult, it's impossible. As long as you think it's difficult, you'll try. I'll tell you, it's impossible.

Do you think it's just difficult never to lust after a woman once in 30 years? And never to get angry once in 30 years? And that's how Jesus lived. Never to seek the honor of men, never to let people know the things you do in secret before God, et cetera, et cetera. It's impossible.

When you realize that the Christian life, the true Christian life, Jesus said that way is narrow, he said at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. And that's why a lot of people just read it and ignore it. But those who take it seriously, have you noticed the one thing that's missing in the Sermon on the Mount? What is it? At the end of all that, he never tells us how we can live that life.

He just tells us you gotta live it. But he never tells us how to live it. Because the whole purpose of the Sermon on the Mount, just like the 10 Commandments, was to bring us to a place of need and there God would test people's honesty.

Have you noticed in the 10 Commandments, for example, that people could keep all the nine Commandments, but when it came to the 10th, nobody could keep it. Because all the nine Commandments are external. Don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't worship idols, don't bear false witness in a court, keep the Sabbath, et cetera.

But the 10th one was don't desire your neighbor's wife. Don't desire your neighbor's house. Don't desire your neighbor's daughter or anything that is your neighbor's.

Who could keep that? Nobody. And why did the Lord put in that 10th Commandment at the end? To test how many people in Israel will be honest enough to say, Lord, I can't keep this. Tell me how to keep it.

God would lead them. That's what Paul said in Romans chapter seven. When it came to the 10th Commandment, he says, I couldn't keep it.

I struggled and I found all types of lusts in my heart. And he said, oh, wretched man that I am, how shall I be free? And the Lord opened the way for him to be free. The same thing with the Sermon on the Mount.

You read the Sermon on the Mount and you take it casually, you'll never get anywhere. But you take that seriously, every single verse in that. If you haven't done it, I'd encourage you to do it.

Go through every verse in that and say, Lord, am I keeping this? Am I keeping this? These are your Commandments. And Jesus said, if you love me, keep my Commandments and I'm not keeping them. You'll come to such desperate need at the end of that, that you'll cry out and say, Lord, how shall I do this? I'm not keeping any of these things.

How can I say I love you when I don't keep your Commandments? And then the Lord will see that I thirst for something I don't have. And that's the power of the Holy Spirit. And now all you need is one more thing.

You believe. If you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? I want to ask all of you sitting here.

Don't get bogged down with these arguments, theological arguments that the Baptists and the Pentecostals at two extremes have on this matter of baptism of the Holy Spirit. Don't get into that. Ask

yourself, are rivers of living water flowing out from? I found it wasn't.

I wasn't fresh. Have you seen the banks of a river? Always green. I said, Lord, my life is not like that.

Most of the time I'm dry. And I saw that I needed the power of the Holy Spirit. I read the Sermon on the Mount.

I couldn't keep it. I said, Lord, I need this power in my life. And for years, I couldn't believe that the Lord would do it for me.

The day came when I believed. I said, Lord, I believe you'll do it for me. I experienced the fullness.

And once we experience the fullness of the Spirit, it empowers us for overcoming sin in our life. It anoints us for ministry in our life. Whatever ministry God called you to do, I found my preaching ministry was enhanced by the fullness of the Holy Spirit, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

And to remain filled with the Holy Spirit, I found all I had to do was to keep a clear conscience. When the Spirit of God is very sensitive, when you feel a prick in your conscience, take it like a thorn in your foot. Pull it out immediately.

And you can remain filled with the Spirit. And the second thing is humble yourself. In every situation where God brings you to a place where you're humiliated, just go down.

And that's what I've discovered through the years and all these years, that if I keep my conscience clear and humble myself in each situation that God humiliates me in some situation, I find I can remain filled with the Holy Spirit. Water always flows to the lowest place, always. And if I humble myself, the Bible says God gives grace to the humble.

The Spirit flows like rivers of living water when we take the low place. And this is the way God wants us to live the Christian life, filled with the Spirit continuously. This is the answer.

And the devil's done such a work by getting Christians at this extreme and that extreme in theological problems. The answer is not in theology. The answer is in having a thirst, an honest acknowledgement that I'm not living the type of Christian life the New Testament calls me to live.

And the answer is not by more struggle, more determination, and more decisions, but by seeking God for the power of His Holy Spirit. I know this changed my life. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

That was the secret of His life. And if He needed, how much more we needed. Let's pray.

Let's bow before God and seek Him. God is a good God. He gives good things to those who ask Him.

The Word of God says you have not because you ask not. Let's ask Him and say, Lord, I want to live the type of Christian life that You've called me to live. Please help me to see Jesus more clearly.

Help me to have faith to believe that You will give me more than I can ask or think. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I trust You.

I surrender every desire and plan and ambition of mine on the altar. I want to please You, Lord, totally. I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

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