

Standing True to God in the Last Days

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of staying true to the core truths of the faith, warning against falling away, backsliding, and being deceived by false teachings. It highlights the need to focus on living a godly life empowered by the Holy Spirit, rather than just following doctrines without experiencing true transformation. The speaker urges listeners to have a personal connection with God, peel off layers of impurities, and pursue a deep relationship with Jesus, seeking to be like Him in every aspect of life.

Scripture: Matthew 24:4, 2 Timothy 4:3, 1 Timothy 4:1, Ephesians 5:25, Hebrews 11:40, Proverbs 22:3, Acts 20:29, Galatians 5:17, 1 Corinthians 4:4

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

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Transcript

There are a number of passages in the New Testament that refer to the last days and a lot of them refer to people falling away from the faith, backsliding and religion in name without power. I want to look at some of them, Matthew 24, when the disciples asked Jesus specifically, verse 3, Matthew 24 verse 3, what will be the sign of your coming in the end of the age? Jesus says, the first thing is, see that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name saying I am the Christ and will mislead many, so there are people who are going to come saying that Jesus is the Christ and still deceive, they are not going to come with some other religious book, they are going to come with the Bible. Now when Jesus said that, we can't pray, Lord let there be no deception, because that's praying against what Jesus said.

Or if we hear there are going to be wars and rumors of wars, we can't pray Lord let there be no wars. Nation will rise against nation, there will be famines and earthquakes, we can't pray Lord there should be no famines and earthquakes. We need to ask ourselves whether we are praying in line with God's will or praying on something that just won't happen.

It's going to happen exactly like God said, there will be deception, there will be wars, there will be famines, there will be earthquakes, and no matter how much you pray, it's going to happen. So it's a waste of time

praying that it won't happen. We can pray for a particular situation that God's people will be protected, that's okay.

They will deliver you to tribulation, we can't pray there should be no tribulation. And they will kill you, we can't pray that they won't kill us, we can pray for protection for ourselves. You'll be hated by all nations, we can't pray that we should not be hated.

Many will fall away, we can't pray that many will not fall away. Lord let nobody betray one another, no it's going to happen. Verse 10, let there be no false prophets, we can't pray that, there will be many false prophets.

Verse 11, lawlessness will increase, people's love will grow cold, Lord let nobody's love grow cold in the church, it's just not going to happen, it's going to happen. People's love will grow cold. But the personal word to us is the one who endures to the end will be saved.

So I have come to see that I don't expect a church where everybody is spiritual. It wasn't that true in the days of the apostles, and it's never going to be true. To live in a world of illusion, to think that we are finally going to build a church where everybody will be spiritual, it is just not going to be true.

But we have to make sure that we ourselves endure to the end, and I believe in the context of verse 12 and 13 put together. It is enduring in love until the end. That means I must not allow anything to prevent me from, as it says in Ephesians 3, from being rooted and grounded in love.

In relation to that verse, I've often said that should be our permanent address. We're never going to shift from that home. Our permanent address is rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.

No matter how people behave around us, my attitude is always going to be rooted and grounded in fervent love for Jesus Christ. And in fervent love for other people, whether they agree with me, disagree with me, call me the devil, hate me, it doesn't make a difference. Rooted and grounded in love myself.

Because the love in my heart is completely independent of the behavior of others. If we are like a branch in the vine in Jesus, we're not getting any sap from any other source. We get out of love if that connection with the vine or the tree gets a bit loose.

Then we come out of love. That can even happen in a home where you get irritated with your partner or any such thing. We have to make sure, dear brothers and sisters, when it says here, most people's love, verse 12, will grow cold.

It's going to happen whether you like it or not. And it happens in the church. In fact, that wonderful church which Paul built in Ephesus, it's the one place where he stayed for three years.

It says in Acts 20, he preached night and day for three years. If you calculate that, that's 2,000 sermons. Can you imagine a church that listened to the Apostle Paul, 2,000 sermons? You'd think, boy, that church endured until the end.

It didn't. About 30 or 35 years after it was planted, Paul had died. Read in Revelation chapter 2, that church is so bad and its leaders, that the Lord says, I'm going to derecognize you as a church.

I'm not going to consider you as a church anymore. You are Babylon. That's essentially what he meant when he said, I will take the lampstand out of your midst.

And if you read Revelation 1, the lampstand was the big sign that it was a church of Jesus Christ. When that's taken out, it's namesake, it's a Christian church, just like most Christian churches today. But the lampstand is gone.

That is a church Paul planted, and not only planted, but he spent three years preaching night and day. The church that listened to 2,000 sermons of Paul's drifted away in a few years. But Paul warned them about that also before he left.

In Acts 20, you read that he called the elders and said, I know what's going to happen when I leave. I sense that the wolves are waiting outside. They're just waiting to come in.

They could not come in as long as I was here, because I had spiritual authority. The wolves are the agents of Satan. They couldn't come in.

But they sat outside the door saying, well, Paul's not going to be here forever. Let's see who's going to keep us outside once Paul is gone. Because they knew the spiritual state of all those people who nodded their head to Paul and said, yes, Brother Paul, we agree, we agree, we agree.

But the devil knew their spiritual state. He says, these people are not like Paul. They're not radical.

They're not wholehearted. They've got other interests in their private life. They've got the right language, and they say the right thing in the church meetings, but I know their interests and their heart and what they live for.

Paul is the only guy I'm scared of. And sure enough, when Paul said that, he wasn't prophesying. In Acts 20, turn there for a moment.

He was not prophesying that, verse 29, after my departure, savage wolves will come in and destroy this flock. Verse 31 is where he said, I preached night and day for three years, 2007. So when he said, after my departure, savage wolves will come in, it was not a prophecy.

It was a warning. It need not have happened. They had taken that warning seriously and repented and said, Lord, I mean, if I were one of the elders there listening to Paul, and Paul saying, hey, after my departure, savage wolves will come in, I would sit there and think, why in the world should the savage wolves come in just before Paul is gone? I'm here.

I want to be wholehearted like Paul. I would search my heart. Say, Lord, is there something in me that the wolves can see that I'm a bit of a compromiser or I don't have that authority, spiritual authority, to keep all these wolves out? Or I'm too much of a men pleaser or someone who's not willing to speak the truth strong and straight? I would judge myself.

And he says another thing, that not only that, even on the wolves from outside, from your own selves, there's 30. You elders, I don't know how many elders were there. He called the elders and said, let's say there were about five of them.

Five elders sitting there. That's all he was speaking to. He wasn't speaking to a big church.

He said, from yourself, you five people, you will start speaking all types of perverse things. Not saying that Jesus Christ is not God or he didn't die for the sins of the world, but usually begins with de-emphasizing some things which are too strong, take up the cross every day. Well, he turned out to be so rigid about

that.

The drift has started. People will start speaking perverse things. And then, not only that, they'll draw away disciples after them.

It's five of them sitting there. I sit there and I say, boy, am I going to draw some disciples in the church after me? Turn against that brother there and that brother there? Try to build my own kingdom here? Paul's not a dumb guy in the spirit. I would severely judge myself, and after Paul has left, I would call the other elders and say, brothers, do you remember what Paul warned us? Please let us judge ourselves.

Make sure that none of us seek our own. That prophecy is not proof of it. I don't think they did that.

That is why we see the result 30 years later in Revelation chapter 2. The Lord says, you have left your first love. You're still having your meetings and your conferences and your hymn singing and your Sunday meetings. Everything's going on well, if I were to paraphrase Revelation 2. Your doctrines are all right.

You haven't gone astray. You're exposing all the false apostles and the false doctrines. But the love that you had for me in the beginning is gone.

That fervent love for me you had when you first got converted. You got grip to the truth. And the fervent love you had for believers in your church who had weaknesses and were not like you and you still loved them in spite of their differences, that's gone.

Now you've become an expert and a specialist, but you've lost your love. What's the use of all that knowledge and all the wonderful sermons you preach if you don't love me like you did at first? Take away the lambskin. Don't repent.

The voice was to the elders, to the senior people in the church. And you know, they didn't repent. They're just as lost and anointing.

So these are warnings to us and to 2 Timothy. First Timothy. Paul had a lot to speak about what's going to happen in the last days.

One of the things I've often suggested to you is when you study the Bible, please try to ignore the chapter divisions. Because the chapter divisions are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Man put them in, broke up the Bible into chapters and verses just so that we can refer to it more easily.

There are wonderful truths that you can discover if you ignore a chapter division. I'll just give you two examples before I come to 1 Timothy 4. Turn with me to John chapter 7. For those who have the habit of reading a chapter a day, good. But I would encourage you, when you finish the chapter, read the 3-4 verses of the next chapter also before you close the Bible.

Here's one example. Jesus had preached a great sermon in John 7 verse 37 about being filled with the Holy Spirit. And then they answered in finally verse 52.

You're not from Galilee. This was talking about the Pharisees talking to Nicodemus. There was no prophet that arised out of Galilee.

And then in verse 53, everyone went to his own home. And I miss something if I close the Bible there. It says, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

I don't think, when I meditate on that, I say I don't think he went to the Mount of Olives. Because I'll tell you why I think he went to the Mount of Olives. Nobody invited him to come home.

His home was in Capernaum. By the Sea of Galilee. They moved there from Manzik.

And that is a three-day journey into Jerusalem. And it's amazing. All these people were blessed by that sermon.

None of them said, hey Lord, stay with us tonight. I cannot imagine that Jesus would have said, no, no, no, I'm not going to stay with you. He's not that type of person.

I conclude that nobody invited him. But he never made a big fuss of that. He says, well, I'll go and sleep under the trees.

That's what he did. I've learned something from that. Never to expect something from someone.

That, hey, I'm your brother or I am a preacher. Or he cares a little bit for me. None of all that.

Zero. That's what I see in Jesus. And the wonderful thing is early in the morning the next day, he comes back.

And again, he began to teach. And he doesn't say like some preachers would. So, you know, last night when I was sleeping under the Mount of Olives to sort of give a hint to people that nobody invited me.

None of all that. You know how some preachers give hints to people about something that they expect you to do for them? So, here it says that Jesus began to teach them. And nothing happened.

I love that. Lord, never let me give a hint when I speak. Not only in a sermon, but even when I'm speaking to a person to hint that you should have done this for me and you never did it.

Don't talk like that to your wife or to anybody. Be like Jesus. I live before my Father.

He always arranges the very best for me. And I'm sure he had a wonderful time under the trees in the Mount of Olives, which gave him the message for the next morning. This is good that nobody invited him.

Otherwise, they would have been sitting talking perhaps and he'd have missed out on that time God wanted to spend with us. So, something good comes out of everything. I'll give you one more example of that.

And that is in Hebrews chapter 11. The danger of missing out on something if you stop at the end of a chapter. Chapter 11, it says about this wonderful list of people, great men of faith.

Hebrews 11. Fantastic men who split the Red Sea, pulled down the walls of Jericho, stopped the sun. Some miracles that none of us have ever seen in our life.

But it says in Hebrews 11.40, God, the last verse, God has provided something better for us. Something better than splitting the Red Sea. Something better than stopping the sun.

Something better than killing lions like David or shutting the mouths of lions like Daniel. What is better? Freezing the dead like Elijah. Something better.

Do you really believe that God has provided something better for us in the New Covenant than even raising the dead? God has provided something better for us. And if someone were to ask you in Hebrews 11.40, what is that better thing? Would you have an answer? You won't have if you stop at the end of the chapter. But if you read on, you see the answer.

Therefore. Therefore means, what is the word therefore? What is the word therefore? Therefore. It is there because it's connected to the previous verse.

Therefore. God has provided something better for us. And that better thing is for us to follow Jesus who took up the cross and endured it.

How many people understand that enduring the cross in our daily life is superior to splitting the Red Sea and stopping the sun and creating the dead? Then your eyes are open to the New Covenant. But I tell you, 99% of believers do not believe that. They think the greatest thing they can do is raise the dead or do some miracle like that.

I tell you honestly, I'd rather take up the cross and follow Jesus every day than raise a dead person. That will only bring me honor. I can't fulfill God's purpose by raising the dead.

I can fulfill God's purpose if I take up the cross. And that is the better thing that God has provided for me. Better than all the miracles mentioned in Hebrews 11.

I don't want to be like Enoch who walked with God or Noah or Moses or any of those guys. I want to follow Jesus. I want to run this race.

The better thing God has provided for us is, verse 12-1, running the race that's before us. And that involves the daily cross. We read in Hebrews 12-2 that Jesus took up the cross and sat down and said, fixing our eyes on Jesus.

When I read fixing our eyes on Jesus, I see two things. I see fixing my eyes on Jesus, first part, in his earthly life he endured the cross. And secondly, now seeing him seated, verse 2, at the right hand of the throne of God.

I have to have a double vision of Jesus. One is how he endured the cross, despising the shame, verse 2. And also seeing him at the right hand. Both are equally important.

To run the race, I look at Jesus the way he took up the cross every single day of his earthly life. And I say, Holy Spirit of God, show me that I can really walk that way and run that race. And also let me never forget that this one who did that is now at the right hand of the throne of God so I can talk to him and exercise his authority and power.

Yet, taking up the cross. I don't know how many believers understand today, particularly among charismatics and others, that this is the better thing. We can hear all these fantastic testimonies.

Most of them are false from these charismatic Christians. And we can have a secret desire. I wish I could do that myself.

I never had that desire. When I was a young believer who didn't know much. But not since I understood the truth of the new covenant.

I've seen this is the better thing. God's given me the best, why should I go back to the second best? So here's another example. So come back now to what I was saying.

What can it be for, verse 1? But. Aha. So that means I was going to the previous verse.

Whenever you read therefore, or but, or and, you say, what's before that? What is before that is the great secret of living a godly life. The great secret. Mystery is a new covenant word.

Not found in the Old Testament. The closest to it is Psalm 25, 14 where it says, The secret of the Lord, that's a mystery, is with those who fear Him. So, I can know this mystery if I reverence God.

And I, to the humble it says in Psalm 25, He will reveal His way. So if I have humility and the fear of the Lord. That's what it says in Proverbs.

By humility and the fear of the Lord, you have riches, spiritual riches. So, then I can understand this mystery. It's not something which is unknowable.

But it's knowable only by humility and the fear of the Lord. If I lack either of these two, it will remain a mystery. It is a great mystery.

There are only two, there are many mysteries mentioned in the New Testament. The mystery of iniquity in relation to the Antichrist and 2 Thessalonians 2. The mysteries of the gospel in the parables Jesus spoke in Matthew 13. He said these are mysteries.

And there are other mentions of that in Ephesians 3. Mysteries. But only two great mysteries. One is this.

The mystery of how to live a godly life. I tell you it is a mystery. Because even many people who have heard about the New Covenant for years, still don't live a really godly life.

At home or in their relationships. So I can say, hey, it is a great mystery. There are so many people who understood it, who understood it so well that they can explain it to others.

And not living a godly life in their home, or in their personal life, or in their financial life, or in their thought life. It is a great mystery that people can understand it thoroughly in their mind, in such a way that they can explain it to others. It is still not a reality in their life.

Great mystery indeed. But just by the way, before I proceed, the other great mystery is Ephesians 5. That is, first I told you how to live a godly life. Second great mystery is how to build a church.

This is only two great mysteries. How to live a godly life and how to build a church. And that is why in CFC we have always emphasized these two things.

What are the two messages we have emphasized in the CFC? Living a godly life and building the church as the body of Christ. That's it. Why? Because these are the two great mysteries mentioned in the New Testament.

See here. He is talking about a man must love his wife as his own body. In that earlier verse 28.

A husband must love his wife as his own body. And it says we are members, verse 30. Christ also does the church, verse 29.

And because we are members of his body, he loves us in the same way. Just like a husband loves his own wife as his own body, verse 29. Christ loves the members of us because we are his body.

And this, therefore man must leave his father and mother to leave to his wife. He's not talking about marriage. He says this is a great mystery, verse 32.

I'm not talking about marriage now. I'm talking about Christ. How Christ left his father in heaven and came to earth.

Just like a man must leave his father and be united with his wife. That's what he's referring to in verse 31. Who in the world would have thought that that verse there, which is a quotation from Genesis 2, 24.

The time of Adam managed to leave his parents and came to his wife. You ever think that refers to Christ and the church? But he says I'm referring to Christ and the church. I'm not talking about husband and wife.

But the way Christ left his father, came to be united with us. We have to leave our earthly connections and be united with him as his bride. So this is the other great mystery.

How to build a church as a body of Christ, forsaking earthly connections, be united with him. And how to live a godly life, two great mysteries. Okay, coming back to 1 Timothy 3, 16.

He reads great is the mystery of godliness. The Living Bible paraphrases excellence. It says in the Living Bible, it is true that the way to live a godly life is not an easy matter.

But answer lies in Christ, who came to earth as a man, who was pure in his spirit. How could a man be pure in his spirit with a flesh like ours? By flesh I mean a self-will like ours. Great mystery.

But he did it. Tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. That's the mystery.

In the time of Adam, no human being ever lived without sin. Jesus went through the whole range of temptation. From A to Z. When he said on the cross, it's finished.

Not just without sin we're finished, the whole range of temptation. That man is capable of being tempted by was finished. Also, a very profound statement, it is finished.

And there's the secret of godliness. The way Christ was tempted, but did not sin. For me, this is the thing that changed my life, brought me to holiness.

When the Holy Spirit began to show me that if you want to know the secret of godliness, see how Jesus was tempted like you are. I remember when I first understood it, I used to say, Lord, now I'm being tempted severely in this area. You were tempted like this when you were 27 years old in Nazareth.

How did you react to it? Holy Spirit of God show me, how did Jesus react when he was 27 years old and tempted exactly like I am being tempted right now? My thoughts or attitudes or anything, I want to follow him. It's a great mystery. It's a secret because many people don't want to know it.

They want to indulge in their self-will and please themselves. Well, then you'll never know it. Anyone who's determined to please himself and somehow live a godly life, he will never know this mystery.

He'll be able to explain it and preach great sermons in the church. It will not be true in his family life. It will not be true in his personal life.

He will keep on committing what most people in the world won't consider sin because little slip-ups and all that. Call it what you like. The person who's determined to follow Jesus in every step is going to see the secret of godliness.

But, now let's go to verse 1. Chapter 4, verse 1. But, the Holy Spirit clearly says that in the last days, some, I think it'll be many, will fall away from this faith. Which faith? This secret of a godly life. They will teach other methods of living a godly life, such as don't get married, verse 3. Be a monk.

Be a nun. That's the way to holiness. Or even among some pedagogical churches, say you shouldn't get married if you're a full-time worker.

Or fast. Fasting, that's the way to holiness. Sustaining from foods.

God is created. So many other means of holiness have nothing to do with the great mystery of living a godly life. The Spirit clearly says people are going to drift away from this mystery and try to produce other methods of holiness, which he calls, in verse 1, doctrines of demons.

Who ever thought that somebody teaching fasting as a way of holiness is a doctrine of a demon? Stay away from marriage. It can be holy as a doctrine of a demon. It is.

And any Christian church that teaches that says I call it a doctrine of a demon because the Bible says they're forbidding marriage. It's in the context of 1 Timothy 3.16, to live a holy life. And there's a hypocrisy there, he says, of liars who, all these people who stay away from marriage, monks and nuns and all, there's such a lot of immorality in their own minds.

And even the people who fast, there's a lot of sin in their lives. The hypocrisy of liars who claim to be holy with all these external disciplines and all that. Their conscience is seared.

That means their conscience is no longer sensitive. So in the last days, this is especially in the last days. We are living in those days.

2 Timothy 3.1 In the last days, difficult times will come. What sort of difficult? Financially difficult? No. Persecution? No.

Not even deception. It will be very difficult. Like the Living Bible says, it's going to be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days.

Why? Because of this deception. Verse 5. People will hold on to an external form of godliness, but deny its power. Now I say the form of godliness is the doctrine.

The power is the power of the Holy Spirit. And there is no way to come to a godly life without one taking up the cross, the power of daily death, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, genuine fullness of the Holy Spirit, the fullness of the Holy Spirit that enables us to put the flesh to death. It says in Galatians 5.17, the Spirit fights against the flesh, and the flesh fights against the Spirit.

That's why we need the power of the Holy Spirit. And that is the power spoken of here. The form of godliness is the doctrine.

It could be the doctrine of the New Covenant. I've seen people preach the doctrine of the New Covenant who are not living a New Covenant life in their homes, or in their financial life, or they get the reputation of

being in a New Covenant church, but that's not the life they're living in their private life. So those are the people referred to here.

They've got a form of godliness, they've got a reputation that they belong to a New Covenant church. They've got a reputation. They even teach some things about the New Covenant.

Maybe they preach in those churches. But the power of a godly life is not evident in their home life, or in their thought life, or in their speech. That is why it says in verse 1, it's going to be difficult to be a Christian.

Not persecution, but because there's going to be a whole lot of form of godliness, people with a doctrine without the life. Verse 5, avoid such men. Don't seek fellowship with such people.

You'll be like them, unless you're going to influence them, change them. But don't be a compromiser. If you're in fellowship with them, keep challenging them to godliness.

Don't just sit back and be a diplomat. It's okay, we are in the same church, we won't disturb. Don't rock the boat.

I want to rock the boat wherever I go, if it's not going in the right direction. Just a diplomat, you know, don't offend anybody. Keep everybody happy.

The numbers in the church increase. I'm not saying that we should teach babies the truth. No, treat a baby like a baby.

To the child, you speak childish things. But don't keep them as a child forever. When they come newly to the church, I'm not saying that we should tell them profound truths.

Let them start with the forgiveness of sins, but pretty quickly lead them to the cross. The baby cross. Some of you, when you get some time, look through this book.

See how many hymns there are on taking up the cross every day. You'll almost find the answer is zero. Even in a song like we sang today, Victory in Jesus.

Can I get victory in Jesus without taking up the cross? Without being filled with the spirit? Those two things are already mentioned there. He plunged me in his precious blood and brought me to victory. That's not how I came to victory.

I got plunged in the precious blood. My sins were forgiven and I was defeated and defeated and defeated for years. The Lord opened my eyes and I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and I need to deny myself and take up the cross every single day.

Then I got into victory. Hardly ever find anything like that. And I tell you, hymns have a tremendous power over us.

We don't realize that. Those are not the hymns I sing to myself when I'm alone. I have a certain favorite hymns that I sing to myself which are only a few verses that I remember, like some of favorite hymns, you know.

Ever when tempted, make me see beneath the olive wound, pure shade, my God alone. Outstretched and bruised and bleeding on the earth he made. And make me feel it was my sin.

As though no other sins were there, that was to him who bears the world a load that he could scarcely bear. That's challenged me many times. No white sin, no verses like death to the world and its applause, to all the customs, fashions, laws of those who hate the humbling cross.

So dead that no desire may arise to appear good or great or wise in any but my Savior's eyes. It has an effect on me if you sing that. I've been singing that for nearly 60 years.

And it has had an effect on my life. I keep singing songs like that. I'll tell you honestly, I don't sing songs like he plunged me into the blow of Jesus and gave me victory because it didn't happen.

It's something more real which is some of A.D. Simpson's songs, you know, like, you know, he's got a lovely song, How Can I Waste My Life? And in short, eternity is near. Soon my life, soon my body may lie beneath the sword. How dare I waste my life? I am not always and all for God.

Remember that hymn of A.D. Simpson? Beautiful hymn. Always and all for God. He's got many verses.

What I said was just one verse. There are other hymns like that of What I Buy Christ and etc. So the hymns we sing, particularly the ones we sing to ourselves when we're alone make a lot of difference in our lives.

Another one of mine which I love is Ill That He Blesses is our good. Unblessed good is ill. All is right that seems most wrong if it be his sweet will.

That's another hymn of favors where think of it, unblessed good is ill. I don't want a good in my life that God does not bless. I don't want a promotion or a money or anything that God does not bless.

Whatever I get must have the blessing of God on it, otherwise it is ill. Unblessed good is ill. And all is right that seems most wrong if it be his sweet will.

I worship the sweet will of God and all thy ways adore. May I live lovely more and more. When I sing it, I ask myself if it's true.

I encourage you to sing some of these meaningful hymns. You just help me tremendously. When I'm alone, I mean, I'm not a great singer, but God doesn't bother about what I can sing.

He sees my heart. I sing it to myself often, even sometimes in the bed. I don't even have to sing it, but save my heart and mind.

Very precious. The form of godliness is the great danger in the last days. It's going to be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days because around us will be numerous people who speak new covenant words.

The form, the doctrine of godliness. What is the doctrine of godliness? It's a new covenant. It's a form, but without its power.

We can have a lust for certain things which don't look like evil. For example, I've often said, if you warned your children about something, they'd disobey you. They'd mess up.

Don't tell them I told you so. Never use those words to your children. Never use those words to a brother.

You warned a brother he shouldn't do this. And he went and did it. And he messed up.

When he comes to you, brother, please help me. I messed up. Never say I told you so.

I never. In my younger foolish days I said it, but it'll never come out of my own mouth now. Because I'm not a great expert to say such things.

God has a right to say it, but not me. My words should be, never mind, let's fix it. You messed up? Let's fix it.

That'll help and encourage that person more than I told you so. It'll help them. I told you so.

Only show them that I'm the great expert. And we'll make him my slave forever. I don't want him to be my slave forever.

In fact, whenever I give a person advice, I would say, a lot of people come to my home and ask for advice, I tell them at the end of it, I say, listen, now when you go home, don't do what I say, please. Go home and pray about it. I'm not God.

I've given you better advice. I want you to have a direct connection with Christ. Take what I say, and take it before the Lord, and if you feel free to do it, do it.

If you don't feel to do it, you feel to choose another path, go that way. And ask God, listen, don't go against your conscience. And if I, I also tell him this, if after you choose the other way, your life gets messed up and you come back to me, I will not tell you I told you so.

I assure you. I'll help you to fix it. That's how I have built fellowship with many, many people who do not look upon me as some guru or pastor who's never wrong, but who's a helper.

I mean, the Holy Spirit's called a helper. Who am I? We're only helpers. Don't ever take a title bigger than the Holy Spirit.

Some people do. I see all these, particularly in charismatic circles, you read about apostles, so and so, and prophets, so and so. I say, what about helper, so and so? That's what I want to be.

Even that's a big title, because it's the Holy Spirit's title. If I'm truly the Holy Spirit, I'll be a better helper. So, be careful about those who have a form of godliness that has no inner power.

And the reason they have a form of godliness is because they love the doctrine. I believe in a church like ours, where there's so much wonderful teaching, and there's so many sermons on YouTube, we can listen and listen and listen, and if you've got a good mind, God has got it all straight. What we preach in CFC, you can teach it.

You can go to a Bible college and teach a class on what we teach in CFC. Yet they may not be living the life. And if that is true of people in our churches, it is because of four reasons.

One, was do they love money secretly? Two, was for their love some type of pleasure. Could be a simple pleasure or an indulging in pleasure beyond where you don't deny yourself at all. And third, they're not lovers of pleasure, lovers of money.

And the third is lovers of self. I left it to the last because that's the most serious thing. You can be a lover of money, or a lover of pleasure, or a lover of self, instead of being a lover of God.

That's the right type of lover. So there are three types of wrong lovers. Lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God.

And that is why, that is the form of Godliness. The form of Godliness is where a person claims he doesn't, the power is when a man really loves God with all his heart. But he has the right doctrine, but inwardly he loves money, he loves pleasure, and he loves himself.

And Paul says further to Timothy chapter 4, so much he has to say about the last days of Timothy, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Lord Jesus Christ, be preached the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience. Don't give up on people. Keep on doing, whether they don't listen, don't preach it the next Sunday.

And if you still say they're not doing it, keep on preaching it the whole year. Preach the same sermon it may be for the 52 Sundays. Don't seek honor.

Preach the word. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience, because the time will come, and I believe we have come into that time, they will not listen to healthy doctrine. The word sound is from a Greek word, from which we get the word hygiene.

Hygienic doctrine. That's the correct translation. Hygienic doctrine is the doctrine of the new covenant, which keeps us from filth and sin and impurity like the surgical period where all impurities are cleansed away.

They put all their equipment in a machine called the autoclave where all the machines are sterilized. That is hygienic equipment. And hygienic doctrine is that.

It is pure doctrine. They will want to have their ears pickled. The teachers will pickle their ears, and I tell you, Christendom is full of ear-pickling preachers who only want money from their congregation.

The result will be that people will, verse 4, turn away their ears from the truth and turn it by sight to all types of myths that's happening in Christendom today. So that time has come. How can we pray, Lord, don't let these things happen? It's going to happen.

And also when we look at church history, it's good to read church history because we learn things from it also. One of the things I've learned in church history is there have been many great movements that God has raised up through the years. Usually with one or two men being gripped by a truth which is not being proclaimed in the time when God raised them up.

Say Martin Luther, for example. 1520 or something like that. The doctrine of justification by faith was just not being preached.

Roman Catholic Church would put money into the offering and the soul that goes to purgatory can slowly come up to God. Things which we know as rank heresy today, that was being proclaimed all over the world. And if there was a Bible, the first Bible was printed only about 50 years before that.

But still, there was a Bible and they wouldn't read it. Martin Luther read it and discovered the salvation of Christ through faith. And boy, how the Roman Catholic Church tried to kill him for proclaiming that.

He got a few co-workers and that is what Lutheran Church is existing even till today. But it backslid within 100 years or so after Martin Luther's time. And then in the 1700s God raises up Martin Luther preached

the new birth.

Wonderful, great man of God. I respect him highly because I don't know whether I could have stood against the entire Roman Catholic Church for chasing me to kill me like they did to him. I respect him.

He was living at that time. He baptized babies. Truth was recovered slowly.

Truth had been buried for centuries. 1200 years, truth was buried and Martin Luther was doing an archaeology digging up and discovering the first part of truth, justification by faith. Then John Wesley came along 200 years later and preached holiness.

By the time the Lutheran Church, which Martin Luther started, kicked out John Wesley. They wouldn't let him preach there. He had to be preached in the open air because they wouldn't let him preach in the pulpit.

But he was a reformer of that time. But he also baptized babies. Then 100 years later came the Baptists and the Brethren movement that baptized babies and they formed churches without pastors and elders and all that, but did not emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit.

I've seen Brethren assemblies today. I grew up in them. The doctrine is correct, but it's like doctrine without power.

It's like a car that doesn't move. Every part of the car is correct because it doesn't have the power to move. Then came the Pentecostal movement in the early 20th century.

They also slid down pretty quickly. Most of them went after money and honor and all that. What we see if you read church history is one thing.

God raises up one or a few people to bring something to light which is not preached until now. Building upon... Now we can't despise that because today we are standing on the... John Wesley was standing on the shoulders of Martin Luther, so he could see more clearly further distance. Then others came and stood on John Wesley's shoulder and could see still further.

We're standing on the shoulders of many, many people, so if I can see further than them, it's not because I'm better than them. I'm standing on the shoulders of these wonderful men of God who each were standing on the shoulders of others so our vision is wider horizon. So never despise them.

I don't. I respect them very highly. But what I say is the movement did not last because did not have such men of vision who were dedicated and committed.

So they just, like I often say, the followers knew the founder. They did not know God. Those early leaders knew God.

Those who followed them knew the founder and his doctrines. They didn't know God themselves. No personal touch with God like the founder had.

And so the movement decayed. So decay comes when we know a doctrine, a wonderful relationship with some elder or leader. Don't have that personal connection with God.

It's not conscience sensitive. It's a revelation on his word. It frees us from the love of money and the love of pleasure and all these things which we have to fight a constant battle from.

I tell you, I'm fighting that battle even today because these onions never get finished. You peel off one layer and think, I got to the bottom of it. No.

Another situation crops up and I say, wow, there's another layer underneath that of something that I have to peel off some more. And I believe it will continue like that until Jesus comes and the last layer is peeled off and I will be like this completely. But it's our job to keep peeling off these layers.

Not that dirty love of money that we had in the beginning, but very, very subtle, subtle, subtle little things. A little thought, a little thing here, or certain love of pleasure, not love of filthy pleasure like it was in the early days. Very, very subtle areas of... I'm not, again, I'm not saying that we should not relax.

I believe in relaxation, especially for the sake of our children. We must be willing to have times of fun and pleasure with them. I believe Jesus ... I remember seeing a movie of Jesus.

It was the only movie that I saw that dared to show Jesus like that. You know, I said, we're playing with the disciples, pushing them around and have you ever seen a movie with Jesus? You know, just like equals. They're pushing them and they're pushing them back.

I said, great. I said, this is the Jesus I believe in. He was absolutely normal with the others.

Not this great leader who everybody stands at a respectable distance. I believe if he was playing with children, he would play around with them. Kick the ball with them and have fun with them.

He was very normal. That is real holiness. There are many things we see when we meditate.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to show us the glory of Jesus more and more in Scripture. Transform us into that likeness. If we pursue that in our personal life, my dear brothers, you will be the most effective and useful brother in the church, even if you can't preach.

If you can't preach, we're nuts. You will be the most effective brother in this church. Really say, Holy Spirit of God, show me how Jesus lived.

This is a better thing God has promised. I don't want to raise the dead or split red seas. There's something better God has promised to me.

Show me how Jesus took up the cross every day. I want to go that way and see Jesus at the right hand of the throne of God, always ready to support me, help me, answer my prayers. Never in a single moment of my life have any bitterness towards anyone or to have an unforgiving spirit towards anyone, and never an unwillingness to apologize to anybody whom I have hurt even slightly, even as a young brother or a child.

That's how Jesus was. And this passion for purity and yet recognizing that I don't have all the light. Paul only said in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 4, I'm conscious of nothing against myself.

That's my goal. Every single day of my life I'm conscious of nothing against myself. Someone who's more mature than me will see things in me that are wrong, okay? I haven't yet come to that brother, you're in 10th standard, I'm in 6th standard, 6th grade, you're in 10th grade, naturally you'll know more than me.

One day I'll get there and I'm working my way little by little. So let's make progress like that and I believe that we can get rid of all the decay going on around us and be what God wants us to be. Amen.

Amen.

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