

(Texas 2009) Question Answers Part 1

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects Christ, understanding predestination, and the necessity of personal holiness and fasting in spiritual growth.

Duration: 1:04:31

Scripture: Proverbs 4:18, Matthew 6:33, Acts 3:2, Acts 4:4, Acts 4:22, 2 Timothy 2:20-21, 1 John 3:2

Topics: "Question Answer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of a man who was lame and begged for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple. Peter and John encounter him and instead of giving him money, they heal him in the name of Jesus. This miraculous healing leads to the salvation of many who heard the message, with the number of believers reaching about 5,000. The speaker emphasizes the responsibility of Christians to reflect Jesus in their lives and to go about doing good, just as Jesus did.

Transcript

I want to give a little introduction. In a question-answer time, the type of question you ask is an indication of your spiritual condition. That's really true.

I've seen it through many years. You see, there were two trees in the Garden of Eden. One is the tree of knowledge, the other is the tree of life.

And all questions in all question-answer sessions I've ever been at in all my life can easily be divided into questions related to knowledge and questions related to life. And where they are related to knowledge, it's a lot of curiosity, which doesn't really help us to grow spiritually. The best questions are questions related to life, because scripture was given to us not to answer a whole lot of questions about many things, but really to lead us to God and to a godly life.

So, I'll try and focus on things related to life. Okay, here's a question. Why do people turn away from God? It's a good question for Christians to ask themselves.

Has anybody turned away from Christ because they've seen me as a Christian? Very good question to ask. We had a very educated Hindu philosopher in India who became India's president in the late 1950s. His name was Dr. Radhakrishnan.

He had a great respect for Jesus Christ. And after observing Christians, he said, He says, You Christians make such extraordinary claims, but you live such ordinary lives. And I've never forgotten that statement.

And I've searched my own heart and life to see whether there's any truth in my life. Because it's true that Christians make the most extraordinary claims of all the religions in the world. Like if you ask God for anything, He'll grant it to you.

And there's mighty power in the name of Jesus. And every knee shall bow and all that type of stuff. And then if our life is really like the life of all the other people in the world, then there's truth in that statement.

That we make extraordinary claims, but live ordinary lives. I believe that a lot of people are turned away from Christ by the way they see Christians live and behave. So, it's a good thing for us to search our own hearts.

John the Apostle must have seen it in his lifetime for him to say, Anyone who says he's a Christian must live as Christ lived. It's a tremendous responsibility to be a Christian. Jesus came to the world to show the world what the Father was like.

And he said at the end of his life, If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Which is the proof that he did a perfect job of what he was sent to earth to do. And he told his disciples, As the Father sent me, so send I you.

Which means, if you put those two verses together, If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. As the Father sent me, so send I you. At the end of our life, we should be able to say, If you've seen me, you've seen how Jesus lived.

I tell you, that's enough to drive us to our knees. Have you seen that as your calling? If you have seen me, you've seen a little bit of what Jesus is like. If you come and live in our home, You'll see a little bit of how Jesus lived in a home.

If you come to our church, you'll see what Jesus is like. That's the goal. And that's why the church is called the Body of Christ.

So, when people saw the physical body of Christ, That was Christ. And today, we're given this title, the Body of Christ. It's an awesome responsibility.

And I'm surprised that so many Christians are not falling on their faces before God, And saying, Lord, forgive us. We have let you down so terribly, By our testimony in our life, in our home, in our church. I think that's the main reason a lot of people turn away from God.

It's not the only reason. Some people just, I don't know. I don't believe there are any greater sinners than us.

I really don't know. I can't say. But it's good for us who found Christ to always humbly recognize That we really know better than all those other people who have turned away from God.

It's God's mercy that drew us to Him. I'm not a Calvinist. I don't believe that God selects certain people to go to heaven.

And certain people to go to hell. But I believe in the sovereignty of God. That God is in control of all circumstances and situations.

And there's nothing outside His control in this earth. And therefore, I need not live in any fear that anything will go out of control. Like someone said, you know, this is another question here.

The big movement today in the church is the doctrine of election, Calvinism. What is the truth? Some of the well-known preachers accepted in radical evangelical circles today are strong Calvinists. I don't agree with their Calvinism.

Because I don't believe that predestination is to heaven or hell. So, I believe that God elects us. But I believe His election is according to foreknowledge.

Now, just to say a few words about election and predestination. 1 Peter 1, verse 1 and 2 says, We are chosen or elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. That means God could look into the future millions of years and thousands of years, the history of man.

And see that a particular time we would respond to the call of Christ. According to His foreknowledge, He would elect. It's very clear here.

It's not random. It's not just like picking out certain numbers or certain names. Elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

So, which means He knew that I would accept Christ and that's why He chose me. Because if it were not like that, if it was sort of random, you couldn't say like it says in 2 Peter 3 that He wants all men to repent. Or like it says in 1 Timothy 2, He wants all men to be saved.

Because it doesn't fit. I mean, if He wanted all men to be saved, He could have chosen all of them. So, when He puts Scripture with Scripture, He wants all men to be saved.

He wants all men to repent. But few there be that find the way to life. And whosoever will may come.

Not whosoever is elected only can come. And we're elected according to His foreknowledge. Putting all these verses together, we can only say that God knew that you would accept Christ, I would accept Christ at a particular time.

And He chose us. Or as somebody put it, all of humanity is walking down a road towards destruction. And we see a gate here which says, the way to eternal life, whosoever will may come.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repent and enter. And some enter through that gate.

And as they enter through the gate, and they've got in, when they look back, over the gate it's written, you were chosen before the foundation of the world. So, you know that only after you go through the gate. That's my belief.

And I think it's consistent with Scripture. I don't find any Scripture that contradicts that view. Predestination.

We can look at Romans chapter 8 and verse 29. There's not a single verse in Scripture that says we are predestined to go to heaven or hell. Predestination only means a destination determined beforehand.

Like you travel in an airplane and you get a ticket. It's called a predestination. The ticket says to such and such a place.

So, like if I came from San Jose to Austin, the ticket said San Jose to Austin. I got into a plane and the plane moves towards Austin. And I get off at Austin, and if the plane stopped anywhere previously, I wouldn't get off.

So, predestination, if it were to heaven or hell, God would have written on the ticket, you're going to heaven or you're going to hell. There's no such thing in Scripture. What it says in Romans 8, 29 is, we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

So, I see that destination on my ticket is not heaven. The destination on my ticket is total conformity to Christ. So, when I see that, like a lot of Christians talk about, I'm on a journey to heaven.

I'm not on a journey to heaven. I'm on a journey, my destination is not heaven. My destination is total conformity to Christ.

And I tell you, if only we would read Scripture more carefully, we would get rid of all these wrong ideas we've got from Christian tradition. There's an evangelical tradition that's found in a lot of our hymns by people who didn't have their theology right. I mentioned yesterday how there are hymns where you only believe.

Repentance is not even mentioned. And also, of going to heaven. No, we're going on a journey, becoming more and more like Christ.

That's our destination. So, if we understood that to be our destination, we wouldn't be just sitting back, waiting to enter heaven one day. We'd be moving forward to becoming like Christ more and more every day.

If we understood that destination right. I find a lot of Christians who just say, my sins are all forgiven, I'm on my way to heaven. How did they get that idea? Because they didn't read their Bibles.

They heard preachers and they believed them. Like I said earlier, if you don't read the Bible, you deserve to be deceived. You deserve to go astray.

Because God has given us the scriptures to guide us. 1 John chapter 3, verse 2 says, this is how we arrive at our destination. 1 John 3, 2, we shall see Him as He is and we shall be like Him.

And if this is our hope, if this is really your hope. And here's another thing. If you ask most Christians, what is the blessed hope? What is your hope? I think 99% of believers would say, my hope is that Christ is coming back.

That's only half the hope. Here it says, we shall be like Him. That's the other half.

That's our destination. So the blessed hope is really that Christ is coming back and when He comes I'll be like Him. And it says in verse 3, if you have this hope, the full hope, you'll spend your life purifying yourself, I would say every day.

Cleansing yourself, purifying yourself, until you have reached His standard of purity. That's verse 3. So I would say that anyone who's not doing what is written in verse 3, doesn't really have this hope. Because it

says everyone who has this hope, purifies himself.

It's an absolute statement. A person who doesn't purify himself, who's not seeking to become like Christ more and more, every day, you may say what you like, but according to this verse, you don't have the hope, which is spoken of here. And that's the tragedy of so many Christians.

And when such Christians come together and try to build a church and they haven't got their destination right, you're going to have a lot of problems. It's like a hundred people sitting on a bus and they all got a different opinion as to where they want to end up. So, that's a problem in a lot of churches.

We want to build churches where everybody knows where they're going. What's your destination? What's written on your ticket? You get into the bus after you see, well, this is the bus I want to get on to. This is the plane I want to get on to.

Otherwise, get off. See, our destination is not heaven. It's becoming like Christ and we're going to get closer and closer to that every day.

And the way we get closer is by purifying ourselves. See, the Bible speaks about two types of cleansing. It's like two sides of a coin.

They're not separate. It's the same coin. One side is God cleansing us.

The other side is we cleansing ourselves. We need to know what God cleanses us from and what we're to cleanse ourselves from. If we walk in the light, 1 John 1.7, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

God promises to cleanse us from whatever sin we confess. If we confess our sins, 1 John 1.9, He is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So, God cleanses us from the guilt of past sin.

We can never do that. Any amount of tears, works, can never take care of past sin. We don't believe in salvation by works.

Salvation is by faith that the blood of Christ is all sufficient to cleanse the guilt of every sin I've ever committed. That's the cleansing God does. But here it speaks of our purifying ourselves.

And this is not the only verse. 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1 says in the middle, let us cleanse ourselves. Not God cleansing us, we cleansing ourselves.

And what's the purpose of our cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit? This is not to go to heaven. That cleansing God does. When the guilt of my sin is removed, I'm prepared to meet God face to face.

I will not face the judgment of God. But this cleansing is to perfect holiness in the fear of God. So, here it's not talking about having our sins forgiven.

Here it's talking about being perfect in holiness. Now the reason why a lot of people don't understand or are not interested in this type of cleansing is because they're not interested in perfect holiness. Their constant song is, there's nobody perfect.

We're also imperfect. Everybody else is imperfect. But the Bible speaks in the New Testament about pressing on to perfection and of perfecting holiness.

So, it's only if you're interested in that that you'll ever learn about cleansing yourself. I mean, it's like in colleges they offer different courses. And if there's a course on perfecting holiness and you're not interested and you don't join the class, you learn nothing.

That's the reason why a lot of Christians have a problem with cleansing themselves. They only know about God's cleansing. And so, they remain defeated, defeated, defeated, year after year, and they're content with that.

And they've got preachers who will tickle their ears and tell them, you're okay. When I say to you, you're not okay. There's something seriously wrong with your Christianity and if you continue like that, you'll be lost.

Because a Christian is supposed to progress. The path of the righteous, it says in Proverbs 4.18, increases in brightness until the day Christ comes. Like the sunrise up to noonday position.

That's the only path of the righteous. And if you're not on that path, you're not on the path of the righteous. So, let us cleanse ourselves in perfect holiness.

Cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh, which is external sin, full habits. And filthiness of the spirit, which is wrong attitudes, wrong motives, wrong inner thoughts, etc. One more verse, 2 Timothy 2. It says, you know, verse 20 and 21.

He says, In a large house there are gold and silver vessels, and vessels of wood and earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. So, supposing you're a vessel of dishonor. How can you be a vessel of honor? How can you be a vessel useful for God? See, a lot of people in our churches are not being used by God.

They are passive listeners to good sermons. And they look for a church where they'll feel comfortable and listen to good sermons. And they never think that God wants to use them.

They think God uses only some people up there in the pulpit. But here it says, If a man cleanses himself, 2 Timothy 2.21. If you cleanse yourself from these things, from all filthiness and wickedness, you will become a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master for every good work. So, if you're not a vessel unto honor, being used by God for every type of good work, it's not because God didn't gift you.

It's because God saw you. You had no interest in cleansing yourself. You were satisfied with your defeated, keeping on sinning, confessing, sinning, confessing, sinning, confessing, endless cycle, or merry-go-round, as I say.

He saw that you were never interested in getting off that, never interested in cleansing yourself so that your Christian life becomes more and more perfect. And that's the reason God doesn't use you. It's not because you say, Well, God hasn't gifted me.

Well, He'll never gift you. Because He sees you have no interest in cleansing yourself. If He saw that interest, He'd have probably given you gifts today which you don't have.

I really believe that many, many Christians have missed God's purpose for their lives because they have not taken seriously this matter of cleansing themselves. So, once we see that predestination is to becoming like Christ, we will cleanse ourselves. Is it necessary to fast? Do you fast? How often? Well,

Jesus said in Matthew 6, 16, When you fast, do not put on a gloomy face.

When you fast, not your face, so that you may not be seen fasting by men. He never said, If you fast. He said, When you fast.

You know, that's simple English. So, fasting was not an optional thing. There are things that are optional.

If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. That's optional. There's no compulsion to follow Jesus.

You can follow the devil. But if you want to follow Jesus, He said, you've got to take up the cross and follow. That's the only way.

But, when you decide to follow, become a disciple, Matthew 5, 6, and 7 were written for disciples. Then, He says, When you fast. So, it's assumed from that, that Jesus considered that it's a certainty that His children will fast.

But, how often? It's entirely up to the individual. God, He never made any rules on that. But, when you read the Acts of the Apostles, you read that the apostles fasted on certain occasions when they had to take some important decision.

In Acts 13, when they wanted to decide about the missionary outreach. In Acts 14, when they wanted to set apart elders. So, they fasted when they usually, they fasted when they had to take some important decision.

Jesus once replied to His disciples when they couldn't cast out a demon. He said, This kind won't go out without prayer and fasting. Now, many people don't fast because they don't understand the logic of it.

I mean, what's the advantage of our missing a meal? Or fasting from some other way? For that matter, in a sense, there's no logic in prayer as well. I mean, I can say about prayer, Is there anything I can tell God that He doesn't know? He knows everything. Why should I tell Him anything? If I'm praying for a sick person, do I love that sick person more than God does? Am I more eager for Him to be healed than God is? If so, I would love Him more than God does.

There's no logic in prayer. And those who are very clever and who are very logically minded, you'll find usually they pray very little and they don't have much faith and they accomplish very little for God in their life, even though they may be very religious and religiously active, but they're not spiritual because they try to reason out everything. See, faith is not against reason.

When the Bible says, trust in the Lord with all your heart, that's faith. And don't lean upon your own understanding. Faith is not against reason, but faith is beyond reason.

It's like a student in the third grade may know nothing about calculus. He's probably studying multiplication. Now, calculus is not against multiplication, but calculus is beyond multiplication.

And if you're happy with just learning multiplication, you'll never reach calculus in mathematics. It's something like that. Faith is beyond reason.

It's not against reason. So, if you're satisfied with what reason can teach you, you'll be like the second grade student who lives at a very low level all his Christian life. If you want to go all the way in the

Christian life, you have to step out in faith in certain things that your reason can't understand or explain because it's beyond reason.

There are many things like that in which, you know, which don't appear right to our senses. Like it appears to our senses that the sun goes around the earth, but it doesn't actually. So, there are many things like that where reason can fail us.

And if we trust in God, we will do what His Word says. Why, for example, should we get baptized? I mean, logically, there's no reason. If you've accepted Christ, that's it.

So, fasting, I've tried to think of why. I think there are certain advantages in fasting. For example, I know I certainly did it to break the power of food becoming my master.

Food is a very good slave and servant, but if it becomes a master, it'll destroy you. It'll destroy you, certainly destroy your spirituality and destroy your health. God gave us food and everything on earth to be our servants, good servants.

Employ them as your servants. Don't let them take over the house. Money, excellent servant.

If it takes over the house, it'll destroy you. Just like if you have a servant, a maid working in your house, and you let her take over the house, you're going to destroy the house. It's good to have a maid.

Keep her as a maid. Food, money, everything must be servants. The tragedy with Christians is that they've allowed these things to rule their lives.

So, that's one purpose of fasting. It helps us to overcome the slavery to food, which we all have. So, it's good to do it as a discipline.

I would say if you haven't done it, start with one meal a day, a week rather, two meals a week, and go to a whole day a week as a discipline. And you can still go to work. I'm not saying you should spend that time in prayer, but you can go to work, but take some time during that day to read God's Word, or listen to a message, or pray, and seek God to reach your destination a little more.

The other advantage of fasting, I found, is when I fast for a whole day, even one day, you begin to know what hunger is like. And you begin to know what many people in the world are facing who don't get a square meal in a day. Otherwise, you know, you can feel sorry for them and send money.

Okay, let's feed the hungry. But if you want to know what they feel like, try and fast for a day or two, and you'll have a lot more compassion for such people. So those are two of the practical purposes of fasting, but I think there's more to it than that.

What does it mean? Okay, and the other question, how often do I fast? I'll answer that. Don't let other people know the words of Jesus. Okay.

The other question, what does it mean to worship in truth and in spirit? Let me read that verse in John 4, 23. An hour is coming. You know, like Jesus said, John the Baptist said, the kingdom of God is, heaven is near.

It's coming. It hasn't yet come. It's coming.

So Jesus said, an hour is coming. It's pretty close, but it's not here yet. When the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

And I believe that hour came on the day of Pentecost. So something happened on the day of Pentecost which enabled us to worship in spirit. Now the Bible says that man is body, soul, and spirit.

Or spirit, soul, and body, the right order. In 1 Thessalonians 5, 23. Man is a trinity, like God is.

Man was made in God's image and one part of it is that, of that image is that we are a trinity. Spirit, soul, and body. Not the trinity in the same way God is.

God is three separate persons. But that's because He's a spirit only. Whereas we are, there's three parts to our being.

The soul is our personality. What we are. With our body we contact this world.

And with our spirit we contact God. And the soul is the person. Adam became a living soul when God breathed on him.

And now as a living soul we have a body with which we're pulled towards the world. Made of dust, drawn to the things of dust. And we've got a spirit that pulls us towards God.

And we in the soul decide which way we want to be pulled. Many times a day we feel this downward pull and the upward pull. And if you want to know why your present spiritual level is wherever it is, it's because of the decisions you took in the past many years from the time you were born again.

The hundreds of decisions where you answered this pull one way or the other. Sometimes you answered the pull of the things of earth. Sometimes you answered the upward pull.

So think of two people who were converted the same day. Ten years later they are not going to be in the same level spiritually. Because in those ten years they faced hundreds of decisions.

And the decision was always am I going to respond to this downward pull or the upward one? And depending on how you responded that will determine where you are spiritually today. You can't do anything about the past but you can certainly do something about where you will be spiritually five years from now. You are going to decide that where you will be spiritually five years from now.

Because you are going to face these two pulls and you are going to respond to one of them. And if you consistently respond to the way God created you to answer to that upward pull you will be a spiritual person very quickly and extremely useful to God in His work. So when it comes to worship we worship in our body soul and spirit.

In the Old Testament worship was limited to the body and the soul. But the Lord said the time is now coming when you will also be able to worship in the spirit. Which is the real worship that God wants.

Worship in the body is bowing down clapping our hands raising our hands using our voice being, you know in harmony with the music and all that is the body. It is necessary. The soul is that we use the soul is our mind and our emotions.

We pay attention to what we are saying when we worship or praise God. That means we mean what we say. A lot of people you know we may have many times caught ourselves singing something with our mouth and we haven't even thought about what we are saying with our mind.

It has happened to me many times. Particularly if you are singing a song you are very familiar with and you like the melody so much and the beat you completely forget about the words because you have sung it a thousand times. And then you are only worshiping with the body.

You are saying the right things but it is not you are not using your mind. You are not saying take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee. Take my silver and my gold not a mite would I withhold.

Take my voice and let me sing always only for my King. And when you think about it it means a lot. There are lots of people who sing it just with the body.

But when you use the mind as well it is a deeper level of worship. Emotions Lord I am excited about this that I can praise you and thank you and worship you. But spirit is even deeper.

Where my whole will is yielded to Him like I said this morning. Worship is where I have surrendered to Him and I just want to love you Lord you are everything to me and I am quite happy with you on earth and I don't need anything else but you in heaven. So that is a deeper level and they could never come into that in the Old Testament.

I think even the expression of the psalmist in Psalm 73, 25 it is a very wonderful expression. I don't know whether he entered into it fully as we can in the New Testament. That I desire nothing on earth but you.

In the Lord's prayer lead us not into temptation. Does God lead us into temptation or lead us testing times? Please clarify. I think the prayer is basically it is something God has promised to do.

He will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability. That is really what it means. Lord don't lead me into temptation which is too strong for me.

He won't do it but we pray that prayer you know just like we say give me this day my daily bread God's promise to provide our need even if you don't pray that prayer. But when we pray that prayer we are expressing that it is God who provides our daily food. And when we pray Lord lead me not into temptation which is too strong for me.

I am asking God to fulfill His promise that He will not allow me to be tested beyond my ability. But He will allow me to be tested because it is only through temptation and testing that we become strong. In fact that is one reason why God has allowed the devil to exist because thereby we are tested.

We become strong. That is why God allows so many circumstances in our life which are difficult. It is through those difficulties that we become strong spiritually.

If we never faced any difficulties in our life we would be fat and flabby Christians spiritually speaking. And you can see that people who have gone through deep trials if they have responded to it in the right way in faith they become strong. Okay.

Where do unbelievers go when they die? Well they go straight to hell. Believers all said to depart and to be with Christ. Not their bodies.

Their bodies are here on earth. But the soul and spirit which are united. They go straight into God's presence if they are born again and go straight to hell immediately.

Jesus made that clear in the true story of the rich man and Lazarus. It is a true story. It is not a parable because in no parable did Jesus ever use names like Lazarus, Abraham.

Never. In every parable there is always a certain man or a certain this. But the very fact that He used names of living people indicated that was not a story.

It was the truth. It was not a parable. So that is the one true story that tells us what happens immediately as soon as a person dies.

What does spiritual discernment mean? How can one be sensitive to that? To discern. I want to read a verse in Philippians 1 which talks about it. It is very important in our time.

Philippians 1 verse 9 and 10. I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and discernment so that you may approve the things that are excellent so that you can be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. Love is not enough.

Our hearts must be filled with love. I often use this illustration. If you are driving a car your gas tank must be full of love but wisdom must be in the driver's seat driving the car.

Otherwise with love you can do a lot of foolish things. If you don't let wisdom guide your love. Think of the love of the prodigal son's father who never sent any money to his son in the far country.

Never sent any food parcels. Allowed him to reach the level of the pigs. Let him go down to the level of the pigs.

That is love with wisdom. You know why? Because it brought him back to the father's house. Supposing you were living in that far country and you saw this prodigal son at the level of the pigs.

What would you do? You'd probably give him some food every day and thus ensure that he'd never go back to his father's house and thus frustrate at God's purpose with your love. There's a lot of foolish love among Christians. Whereas God's love was a hard tough type of love that sought his eternal good and allowed him to reach the level of the pigs so he'd come back to his father's house.

Sometimes when God disciplines a man we need to be sensitive to discern what should I do for him now? When the Lord, when Paul put out a man from the Corinthian church for living in immorality, he told the other believers, don't let anybody go and eat with him. Don't talk to him. Don't eat with him.

Sounds pretty hard, right? But you know, that's the thing that brought him back to the church finally in repentance. Because he saw how dark it was out there without fellowship. Now if there were some foolish believers in Corinth who thought that Paul was being very hard, I'd better go and show some compassion.

I'm more compassionate than Paul. He'd have made sure that that fellow got lost and went to hell. Paul had more love for him.

So he's got to see how dark it is out there in the world so that he repents and comes back to the church. And you read in 2 Corinthians 2 that he came back. And I find that a lot of believers don't have that type of discernment in their love.

They've got a lot of love. But wisdom is not in the driver's seat. The car is just going over the cliff because there's no one in the driver's seat.

So that's what I mean by it's not enough to have love. He says, I want your love to grow in real discernment, verse 10, so that you may approve the things that are excellent. Have you heard the proverb that the good is the enemy of the best? Excellent is better than good.

You can do something good and miss the excellent in your life or for somebody else. If you gave food to the prodigal son in the far country, you'd do something good, but it wouldn't be the best because he'd never go back to his father's house. So this is where we need to allow the Holy Spirit to make us sensitive to the voice of God.

What shall I do here, Lord? Let me give you a classic example. Acts chapter 3. The advantage of being sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 3. We read of a man who was lame, sitting at the beautiful gate of the temple.

Acts 3, verse 2. There was this man who was carried daily to the beautiful gate of the temple and kept there, and he was begging. And it says later on in chapter 4 that the man was over 40 years old. So that's Acts 4.22. But here was a man from childhood.

He was lame. Year after year, maybe all of the 40 years or at least 20 of those years, he was carried, kept at the gate of the beautiful gate of the temple, and he would beg for alms every day. Peter and John, verse 4, saw him, and he said, Give me some money.

And Peter said, I don't have any silver and gold, verse 6, but in the name of Jesus, get up and walk. And he got up and walked, and the result was, we read in chapter 4, in verse 4, that many who heard the message after Peter healed this man were saved, and the number came to about 5,000. So there were many thousands converted as a result of this one healing followed by Peter's message.

Now go back to before, say, a few months earlier, a few years earlier, and see Jesus walking into the same temple through the beautiful gate, and this man sits there. He was there for years. Asked Jesus for alms, and Jesus would pray, Father, am I supposed to heal him? No.

Give him some money. He gives him some money. The next week he comes along and he sees the same man.

The Spirit says, give him some money. Don't heal him. For three years, he never healed him.

And there you see, if Jesus had healed him, those 5,000 people would not have been converted sometime later. You see how you can hinder God's work by doing good according to your wisdom. A lot of foolish love.

I've seen a lot of it among Christians who think they're more loving than their elder brothers, who think the elder brothers are being very hard sometimes. Stupid, carnal Christians who hinder the work of God. So I can understand why Paul said, I pray that your love will grow in discernment so that you can approve what is excellent.

You can't do that any other way than by walking with God. So, don't think you know so much. Don't think you love so much.

What you need is wisdom. What you need is discernment. And all your cleverness and all your so-called love won't help there.

You've got to have the mind of the Spirit. You've got to be yielded to God. And that's where you'll find some of these people who you think are being a bit hard are actually more loving than you are.

Because they care for that person's eternal good. Whereas you may be only caring for his temporary good. I've faced numerous situations like that in building the church.

Different churches in India. When people thought I was being very hard in a situation. I'd say, I couldn't care less what you think about me.

I see that this is what God wants to do. But a few years later, they'd say, Ah, Brother Zack, you were right. We must grow to that.

We must grow in discernment. And very often, when we show love, we're seeking to get honor. You know, you'll always get honor if you show love to somebody.

But if you show the type of love that God wants us to show, you may not get honor. Except from God. Because people may misunderstand.

So that's where discernment is very important, especially in our time. What did Christ mean when he told disciples that they would do greater works than he did? That's a very important question to answer in our time. John 14, and verse 12.

He first said, You will do the works that I do. Then he said, You'll do greater works. So if I were to ask somebody, Can you tell me some of the works that Jesus did? Most Christians would tell me, Well, he fed the 5,000.

He walked on the water. He raised the dead. I'd say, Hang on.

You're telling me what he did in the last three years of his life. I'm asking you to tell me what he did in all of his life. Often our mind goes to just the supernatural, just the things he did in 10% of his life.

But the works that Jesus did were in 33 years. And all of Jesus' works could be summed up in this one statement in John 6, 38. I came to do my Father's will and not my own will.

We can say that all the works he did were works of obedience to the Father. What did he do for 30 years at home? He submitted to Mary because the Father told him to. He earned his living as a carpenter.

And I think the Holy Spirit can show us the type of works that he did in those 30 years. For example, if his mother told him when he was 12 years old in the middle of a game at a very interesting time when it was Jesus' turn to bat and the mother calls him home for some work, he'd drop his bat and go. Not many children would do that.

Or his mother told him to go to the well and draw some water, he'd do it. And he wouldn't come back with half a bucket of water. He'd come back with a full bucket of water.

These are the type of works he did. If he made a table, it would be as perfect as possible. He was upright in his work.

If a child came into his carpentry shop and broke something, he wouldn't get upset over it. He'd pick up the child and kiss it and say, It's okay. I love you more than that.

I can make another one. If he made something for some poor widow and the widow asked, What's the charge for it? It's a gift for you. Do you want to do the works that Jesus did? If you believe, you can do it.

The Apostle Peter summed up Jesus' life in Acts 10, 38 by saying, He went about doing good. Can we do that? You may not be able to preach, but who's there who can say, I don't know how to go around doing good? What are the works that Jesus did? Maybe you and I can't walk on the water or feed the 5,000 with five loaves, but can we go around doing good? And say, Lord, is there some good I could have done to someone? Is there somebody I can serve? Is there somebody's feet I can wash? Is there a dirty job I can do for someone? Or to help the church in some way? So, the works that Jesus did were works of obedience to the Father. And if that included raising the dead, He raised the dead.

But basically, it was doing what the Father will or take the matter of overcoming temptation. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, but He never sinned. Those are the works that Jesus did.

And if you have faith, we believe that we can do everything that Jesus did. We can overcome sin exactly like He did. When it comes to ministry, if God calls you to a particular ministry, He will give you the grace to do that ministry the way Jesus did it.

But if He doesn't call you to that ministry, you are not supposed to do it. I believe with all my heart that if God calls me to a healing ministry, I will be able to heal like Jesus did. But God has called me to a teaching ministry.

So, I seek to teach as Jesus would teach. But the particular ministry that the Lord has called you to, you must believe that He will give you the ability to do that task He has called you. All members of the body have got a different ministry.

And He will give you the ability to do that ministry which He has called you to do. That's the works that Jesus did. And greater works than that? Now, let's think.

What is it that Jesus could not do during His entire earthly life which we can do? Jesus could not make any of His two disciples one with each other. He had eleven and on the last day of their earthly life they were competing with each other as to who is going to be the leader. He couldn't eliminate the spirit of competition from His eleven disciples.

And Jesus said, we'll do a greater work than He did. We'll be able to build a body where we'll get two, three, four, five, six brothers who have no competition with each other. We'll be able to work together, submit to one another.

Why is that? That's because those eleven people didn't have the indwelling Holy Spirit. Whereas we are post Pentecost where believers can have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them and that's why we can do more than what Jesus did. That's something like saying Albert Einstein was one of the greatest mathematical geniuses of the last century.

But I can say with maybe one percent of the genius that Albert Einstein had, I can do a calculation today faster than Albert Einstein. You know why? Because I have a computer. I have access to equipment that he didn't have access to.

He'd have to work it out of his brain and I'd work it out of my computer and I'd get the answer ten times faster than him. So you see, it's not because I'm cleverer than Albert Einstein. That's just an illustration.

It's not because we are more spiritual than Jesus. No, but we have access to a resource that Jesus never had in his disciples when he was on earth. That is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Only he had. None of the disciples had. Today, we can have the indwelling Holy Spirit and we are working with people who have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We can do something greater than Jesus did. Make a body. Okay.

What about receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands? In the Acts of the Apostles, we'll have a break after this question. In the Acts of the Apostles, we find different ways in which people were filled with the Holy Spirit. Let's take the first Acts 2. A number of things.

Many people only take one of those things and make a doctrine out of it. They all spoke in tongues. That was only one of those things.

What all happened on the Day of Pentecost when they were first filled with the Spirit? They spoke in tongues. There were visible tongues of fire on top of everybody's head. Nobody ever talks about that.

There was a rushing wind. And fourthly, they spoke in a language which they never learned and which everybody couldn't understand. Now, I've never seen that happen anywhere.

And I don't think anybody has. All these four things happened. So, when people take just one of those and say that's the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit, I have a question.

Then the second time when we read of people being filled with the Holy Spirit, in Acts chapter 8, we don't really have any evidence what happened, but people could see something. But there we read that Peter and John laid hands on them. In Acts chapter 9, we read the Apostle Paul being filled with the Holy Spirit and Ananias laid hands on him.

In Acts chapter 10, they were not even baptized. Cornelius, nobody laid hands on him and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. In Acts chapter 19, again Paul laid hands on the Ephesian Christians.

So, that doesn't seem to be a common pattern. In some cases, they laid hands, but it is usually the Apostles. And the other thing we see in laying on of hands was that everybody the Apostles laid hands on were filled with the Holy Spirit, which makes me feel that it was a special gift God had given to the Apostles.

I've never seen anybody with that gift today, where every single person they lay hands on is filled with the Spirit. I haven't seen it. I don't think there is any such person anywhere.

But in the case of the Apostles, in Acts 19, for example, there were 12 disciples and it doesn't say 8 of them received and the other 4 didn't. No, it was always a 100% rate of success. But it doesn't seem to be a common pattern throughout.

And so, today, we don't make that a rule. God can do it with or without the laying on of hands. Another question is, do people fall backwards and lay on the floor as shown on television? Well, if they want to, they can, but you don't have to.

That's all I say. I think it's a psychological response to what they think is expected of them or some type of hypnosis where you submit to the authority of this great man of God and you know that you won't get hurt because you've got the catchers behind. Now, Jesus didn't train a whole lot of catchers.

I think this is very different today what we see. There's no such gift the Holy Spirit catches. So, I think it's more psychological and dangerous if it's due to hypnosis.

I see that Jesus lifted people up. I never see him pushing people down in the whole Bible. So, if people do the opposite of what Jesus is doing, I'm a bit wary of that.

So, if you go to such a meeting where people are falling down, I usually give people a couple of promises. Psalm 91, a thousand shall fall on your left side and ten thousand on your right, but it shall not come near me. Or an even better one, in Jude 24, Jesus is able to keep you from falling.

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