

The Blessed Life of the New Covenant

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life in constant communion with God, focusing on the need to pray without ceasing, rejoice always in the Lord, and let our speech always be filled with grace. It highlights the New Testament standards of living, such as not just avoiding sin but also maintaining a heart attitude of humility, grace, and constant fellowship with God.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Philippians 4:4, Colossians 4:6, Revelation 12:10, Acts 16:6

Topics: "Constant Communion with God", "Living a Grace-Filled Life"

Description

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Transcript

We are thankful to the Lord for having given us a very good day yesterday and it shows us that God is not just interested in giving us sermons. He wants us to have a good time and He wants the children to have a good time too. So many people think of Christianity as a boring religion.

It's not true. I found it to be exciting. And I have been a Christian 63 years and in the early years I did not find it exciting because I did not know the way of the cross and I did not know the New Covenant.

So there is an external enjoyment that the children have here. For those of us who have grown up, we want something more permanent. There are two things you need to clearly understand and experience.

One is the way of the cross and the other is the New Covenant. Those have been the things that changed my own life. When I was born again, almost as soon as I was born again, the Holy Church that was nearby, the Religious Church, was a church which majored on the study of God's Word.

And I was very thankful. Bolognese people, they preached the New Word, the study of God's Word. And that made me study God's Word in depth for the first seven years of my life.

I was very, very thankful. But what they did not preach was the way of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit. So if you have only a study of the Word and you keep on listening to messages, good messages, etc., you can end up being very, you know, ill-mannered and in bad moods and lose your temper and

those things don't disturb you.

I found that some of the leaders of those churches were like that. Their daily life didn't seem to match up with their emphasis on the study of God's Word. So each church can have major on some... I found among the Pentecostals, for example, they major on times of loud singing and praise on Sunday morning.

And I found it didn't sort of continue throughout the week. Anyway, I was young, I was only 22 years old and I said, Lord, I don't want to find fault with others. I want to worry about myself.

And I wanted to know that life in the Spirit, that's been my longing right from then. It took me a long time to experience it more and more. But I knew that the secret of Jesus' life was not just that he knew the Word of God.

In fact, he didn't have a Bible. For 1400 years, Christians never had a Bible. The printing was discovered only in the 1400s.

So if people heard the Apostle Paul, they had to sort of remember what they heard. And of course, Paul later wrote it down on parchment and then maybe a few copies of it. Nobody had a copy at home.

It was too expensive to have a parchment, handwritten letters of Paul. So how did God expect those early Christians to live? It's a good habit to read the Bible every day. But I see lots and lots of people who read the Bible every day, who have family prayer, but they lose their temper.

And they don't seem to convict. And then years and years, they've been believers 30, 40 years and still losing their temper. Or they never seem to come to the light where they're always in a good mood.

I don't think they even have a desire to be always in a good mood. They say, yeah, we're on this earth, we have bad moods now and then. Well, don't blame that other guy who says, we're in this world, we just lust after women now and then.

Once in a while, I avoid pornography. There's no other way for me to survive on this earth. There's no difference between that guy and the guy who says, I get in a bad mood once in a while.

If your problem is a bad mood, his problem is pornography. You don't allow him to do that. But is that the Christian life the New Testament offers us? No.

I want to say, dear brothers, if you are satisfied with anything less than what God has promised in his word, that's all you'll get. I've observed believers in many countries over many, many years. And I've seen this is true.

When a person is satisfied with his current spiritual level, that's all you'll have. Let's see what the Apostle Paul said towards the end of his life. Well, not exactly the end of his life, but after he'd been a Christian for many, many years.

Philippians 3 and verse 12. This should be our attitude till we see Jesus face-to-face. I can say honestly before God, this is my attitude.

Philippians 3, 12. Not that I have already obtained or have already become perfect. Now, I have met certain groups of Christians who boast, I have victory over sin totally.

I say to such people, you haven't seen yourself. That's why you think you've got victory over sin totally. You can have victory over sin in the areas you have light on, which is 10% of your life.

90% of your life, you don't have light. Till you walk with the Lord and God gives you more light, then you realize that what you boasted about was not true. So, Paul is very honest.

He's lived close to the Lord and he discovered that he was not perfect. Now, I'm sure every one of us sitting here will acknowledge, I am not perfect. But he didn't stop there.

But he says, I want to press on to become perfect. Now, that everybody doesn't say. I think most Christians would acknowledge that I'm not perfect.

But they don't go on to say, but every day of my life, I'm pressing on to perfection. Because I want to lay hold of, it says in verse 12, that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of me. And I want to tell you, Christ Jesus did not lay hold of Paul to make him an apostle first.

That was secondary. Remember, in the Lord's plan for our life, ministry is always secondary to life. Life is more important than ministry.

Like you say, health is more important than money. So, Paul had a fantastic ministry, but that was not primary in his life. He says, I want to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of me.

So, if I were to ask you, why did Christ lay hold of you? I hope you know the answer. I did not know it when I was first converted because people didn't tell me. Now I know.

Christ laid hold of my life to make me like himself. In very simple words, to make me like himself. 100%.

And once I see that, I say ministry is secondary. I said, Lord, if you don't want me to preach, to make me dumb, I'd be quite happy. Becoming dumb won't prevent me from becoming like Christ.

It will limit my ministry. Fine. You want me to be venerated? I'm happy.

Only thing, I don't want to be a burden to others, so don't make me better. That's something I constantly pray. I never want to be a burden to anybody else in my life, financially, physically or anything, no matter how old I am.

But my passion is not ministry. I do long to spread the gospel. I do long to see churches built that are reflecting the new covenant, but that's not my primary desire.

Underneath it all is a tremendous longing that I have every day of my life to become a little more like Christ. And I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters and children, have this desire in your life. Lord Jesus, I want to be more like you.

And if you have a passion for that, more and more the Lord will help you. And that is the main reason why he sent the Holy Spirit. Because in the Old Testament, they didn't have the Holy Spirit.

They just had a lot of commandments. Do this, do this, don't do this, don't do this. And it's very easy for us to listen to messages with the same spirit that those people listened to the law in the Old Testament.

Don't do this, don't do this, don't do this, don't do this. And I try to do all that, and I don't manage to do everything perfectly. But that's not the goal of the Christian life, because then we're back under the spirit of

the law.

We're in the grace today. And I see that God's grace is primarily to help us to become, to fulfill his purpose. When God made man, he did not primarily want a servant.

He wanted a son. He wanted a daughter. He not somebody to serve him in the garden.

He had millions of angels who served him already. You know that God made angels before he made Adam. And so all those millions of angels were serving God.

They could do anything he commands them. They had a lot of supernatural powers. But when God made Adam, it says he made him in his own likeness.

That is the first person he created in his likeness. And I think the devil was the highest angel before he became the devil. He was a bit jealous of that.

Why? We angels were not made in his likeness. Why in the world has God made someone in his likeness there? I'm going to spoil that. I'm going to destroy that.

And he succeeded. And you see, when he forgot to make somebody in his likeness, he's got to not make someone like a robot who will obey him 100%, but someone who will obey him out of a free choice. That means you can't have free choice unless you have the opportunity to disobey.

If God says do anything you like, your obedience is not tested. But when God told Adam, you see, for example, like I've often said, the planets and the stars, they obey God 100%. And they've been obeying God for thousands of years.

But they don't become sons of God. They don't become Christ-like. And God finds no delight in all those things obeying 100%.

And it's interesting that there were angels who were obeying him in heaven, who were obeying 100%, but God was still not happy with that. You've never wanted to make someone like himself. Just like parents who have children.

God is a father. So remember this, my dear brothers. If you want to satisfy God's heart, it's not by reading the Bible every day.

That's a good habit. I've had it for 63 years. I don't dislike it.

It's helped me tremendously. And ever since I knew the importance of being filled with the Spirit, that's another thing I seek God for every day. But I know what delights God's heart is not these daily practices.

It is reflecting the image of his Son. If you can see, make that the passion of your life. Lord, I want to increasingly reflect the likeness of Christ in my relationship with everyone, and especially at home with those whom I meet every day.

It's easy to be kind and gentle and gracious to people we meet once in a while. There are a lot of unbelievers, atheists, who are very well-behaved. We meet them once in a while, and they look so nice.

They're not always like that. And they're certainly not like that in their home. So we want to be like Christ 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 24-7.

I remember in the early days when I was studying the Bible, and I found all these other people around me who emphasized Bible study. But even the great leaders who got up and preached in that church, they would lose their temper and get angry at each other. And I heard things like that in their home as well.

And I said, Lord, there's something I've missed here. Bible study is not all. I wanted the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And that's when I began to seek God in the part of the Holy Spirit. And I mentioned this before. The Lord said to me, you cannot have that without the way of the cross.

And I saw that when—that's when Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, when he submitted in baptism, you're submitting to somebody else, putting you to death. See, that's the meaning of baptism. Maybe you didn't understand what you did when you got baptized.

But let me tell you now, most of you here are all baptized in water, perhaps all of you adults. What does it mean? You're allowing—what do you allow in baptism? You allow somebody to push you right underwater. And if he kept you there, you'd be dead.

You wouldn't be here today. But then he lifted you up. What is the symbolic meaning of that? We talked about the symbolic meaning of the Lord's table yesterday.

What's the symbolic meaning of baptism? I am willing, Lord, for anybody in the world to put me down to death. I will not fight. I will not resist.

I will die to my self-right. I'm not going to be doormat to let them run over me. But if somebody decides to put me to death in some way spiritually, I'll accept it.

I'm not going to fight with them. Because I believe my Heavenly Father will not allow me to stay underwater like that. That man who baptized me lifted me up.

And God is more faithful than that. If I allow someone else to put myself to death, my Father in heaven will lift me up. You must have this confidence.

Why do we resist when people treat us badly? I don't have the confidence that God will lift me up. That's why I don't take up the cross. The reason Jesus submitted to the cross was He was absolutely sure He wouldn't be dead in the grave.

His Father would raise Him up. And I have that now after so many years of experience. I have the absolute confidence, because I've seen that in every single situation where people have put me down, God has raised me up.

And if I accept it, I resist it. For example, take the simple matter of getting angry. Why do we get angry? Jesus spoke against it.

He said, it's so serious in Matthew 5 that He said, we can finally take you to hell if it's uncontrolled. It's because somebody does something or says something that irritates the self of life. And I've asked myself, if you get angry at a dead man, how is he going to react? There will not even be a change in his expression.

In the early days when I began to understand this, that if I want the power of the Spirit, and I think of Jesus receiving the Spirit when He was baptized, when He submitted to death, and I said, Lord, if that's the way, I want to choose that way. And I remember one thing the Lord spoke to me very clearly in my heart at that time. The Lord said, as long, you know, Jesus' baptism was symbolic of His accepting death, and the Spirit came upon Him, and the Lord said to me, as long as you're willing to choose this way, my power will rest upon you.

That's what I wanted. But the day you feel, the day you choose to stop walking this way, my power will depart. So I realize that today.

I can experience God's power in my life and ministry for years, and then I can go. I can go if I don't choose the way of the cross. So if you want a home that glorifies Christ, a life that glorifies Christ, a ministry that glorifies Christ, there is no other way than by accepting the way of the cross, which is when God allows people to put you to death inwardly.

You say, okay, I will not resist. So let me show you some verses. You know, in the Old Testament, once a week on the Sabbath day, they were not supposed to do any work.

They were supposed to spend their time with God and go to the synagogue and hear the scriptures, etc. So their life was sort of holy, apparently outwardly holy one day a week. And the other days, they did what they liked.

But in the New Testament, it's so different. Once the Holy Spirit came, there was no such thing as once a week. That's where the Seventh-day Adventists, some of them are believers, I think most of them are not, because they emphasize that you can't be saved if you don't keep the Sabbath.

That's like in Paul's time, some people said you can't be saved if you don't get circumcised. It's similar. You can't be saved unless you keep the Sabbath.

There's a lot of garbage, rubbish. That's not the way of salvation. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ and repentance.

But what changed in the New Covenant is what was once a week, Sabbath, became a perpetual Sabbath. That means every day of the week, I'm with God. But not in the way of stopping to work, but in the way that I don't believe that I can do that work.

Every day, I want to allow God to do His work in me. That's the meaning of the Sabbath. So, that's the meaning of living by faith.

They did not live by faith in the Old Testament. And the finest expression of faith that I have found in the New Testament is John Chapter 15. It's helped me tremendously in my life and my ministry.

This, to me, is the definition of faith. John Chapter 15, verse 5, the last part. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

I want to ask all of you a question on that. Do you really believe that? Do you really believe that apart from Christ, you can do nothing of spiritual value? Yeah, a lot of earthly things you can accomplish are very clever, accomplished, capable. But things of eternal value, anything you do apart from Christ, the Lord, I return it back.

I'm convinced of that, and that's what's helped me to know. So, the life of faith is the life of perpetual dependence on Him. Like it says in the same verse, you are the branch, and I'm the tree.

It's a beautiful example, because we see trees and branches all over. If any branch would speak, it would say, I can't do anything if I'm cut off from the tree. Not even for a single moment.

Even if I've been in the tree for 50 years producing apples, you cut me off, I won't be able to produce one apple. So, what is faith? Faith is that branch, depending upon the tree, perpetually, 50 years later, saying, I'm just as helpless today as I was on day one. I need to receive the sap.

There's a little liquid that flows from the tree into the branch. You know, you children, that's how that liquid is what produces the fruit. Whatever fruit, all the fruits that you eat come through some branch producing that fruit because of a liquid that flows from the tree into that branch.

That's a picture of the Holy Spirit. You cannot produce anything without that Holy Spirit empowering us for our life and our ministry. We need the power of the Holy Spirit all the time.

That's why things changed on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit come to earth. So, this is my definition of faith.

To live by faith is to perpetually recognize, I must be in the tree all the time. How to be in a good mood 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? You think it's possible? Impossible. Something or the other will happen to disturb our mood.

Now, my next question is, if you abide in Christ, is it possible? If the life of Christ is flowing into you all the time, is it possible? I believe it is. And that's what we've got to learn. Lord, I want that life of Christ flowing into me all the time.

My Christian life is not in fits and starts. For some time I'm very spiritual and then something happens and I get in a bad mood or I become all worried and anxious for a length of time. And then that problem is solved and then I'm back in a good mood again.

And what's the difference between us and other people in the world? The other people in the world live exactly like that. Something goes wrong and their whole mood is disturbed and then everything gets settled all right and then they're in a good mood again. What's the difference between us and them? Except that we go to church, read the Bible and claim to have a lot of spiritual understanding.

But daily life is very much like this. It should not be like that. I must be fed up with that type of similarity between my life and the life of people in the world.

I say my life must be fundamentally different from theirs. And that's only possible if I recognize I am a helpless bride. That's what's helped me the most.

When it says the righteous shall live by faith, it's not just that I believe that Christ died for me and He rose again and He's coming back. That's just intellectual. The Bible says the devils also believe.

You think there's a single demon in hell that doubts that Jesus came, that He died, that He rose again, He's coming back. I tell you the devils know the Bible better than us. And they believe everything written in it.

But it doesn't change their life. We have to remember that it's not by a lot of knowledge of the Bible that we become spiritual. It's by a helpless, perpetual, daily dependence on the Lord.

And so, since this is the New Covenant life, you have some amazing statements in the Bible. I want to show you some of them to see what a strong, what a way God wants us to live. Let's begin with a statement in Acts chapter 2. Well, before that, one of my favorite verses, 1 John chapter 2 verse 6. This is the place exactly where I've just been saying.

1 John 2 6, we begin here. The one who says he abides in Christ, I think all of us adults here say that. I am in Christ.

Okay? What does God expect you to do? Every single day to walk on earth in the same manner as He walked. Do you believe that? Do you believe that's God's will for you? You will almost never hear anybody preach on this verse. Go and search YouTube and see if anybody preaches on 1 John 2 6 and tells you how to live that way.

You won't find it because people don't believe it's possible. They say, I believe in the Bible and every word is true but they don't believe this is possible. Everyone who says he abides in Christ ought means it's a responsibility to walk in exactly the same way as He walked.

And this is not the testimony of some new convert. This is a man called John who is writing at the age of 95 who was filled with the Holy Spirit when he was 30 years old. And for 65 years he walked with God and he writes this.

This is not some young fellow giving some testimony. If I were to paraphrase it, John is saying brothers and sisters, he won't say little children that's why he said the worst one. He's only younger than me, John says.

Let me tell you something. From 65 years of my experience, if you say that you're in Christ, you must walk as He walked. Take it seriously, at least from today.

Say, Lord, I haven't got there. It may take me a long time to get there. It may take me years to get there, but I'm going to get there.

Determine in your heart. That's what I determined long ago and that's what made me pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And that's when the Lord leads the fullness of the Holy Spirit on the way of the cross.

They do go together. So, when we come to that light, now we can turn to the Acts and the Apostles, chapter 2. How did Jesus live? He who says He abides in Him must walk as He walked. How did He walk? Chapter 2, verse 25.

David says of Jesus, I saw the Lord always in my presence. He always lived in the presence of His Father. That's why He never did anything wrong.

He's always, the Father was there before Him. I've often said to married couples, how do you talk to each other when you're all by yourself? Be honest. Nobody else is listening.

Maybe one day when a lot of things went wrong in the house or in your work how do you talk to each other? You say, well, because of the pressure. On that particular day when there was a lot of pressure, things went wrong, supposing Jesus physically came to your house and stood between you, then how

would you talk to each other? Would you still make the excuse, oh, because of the pressures of work, I had to speak to my wife or my husband like that? No. The presence of Jesus would immediately make you change your tone of voice.

Even if a believer from the church came to your house you'd change your tone of voice. Leave alone Jesus Himself. So when we say the Lord is with us, do you really mean it? I'm asking the hard questions.

I asked myself. And I said, Lord, it's not true. But I want it to be true in my life.

I want to see the Lord always in my presence. It'll take time. It took your little child a long time to walk.

It took it even longer for it to run. It took a long time for you to earn your living, to get a job. Everything in life takes time.

It may take time for me to come to the place where the Lord is always in my presence. But you'll never get there if you don't aim for it. There's some saying that if you aim for the stars at least you'll reach the top of some mountain.

So aim for Lord. I want this life where I'm always in the presence of the Lord. Think of that word, always.

Then turn with me to Acts chapter coming forward. You know, God has set the apostle Paul as an example for us just like Jesus. I think that's because when we say follow Jesus, that's too high a standard.

But you know Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. 1 Corinthians 11 verse 1. He said, follow me. Is it right for a man to say follow me? If you don't know that verse, look it up.

1 Corinthians 11 verse 1. Follow me as I follow Christ. Jesus said follow me, period. Paul did not say follow me, period.

He said follow me as I follow Christ. And the picture I get is a mountain say the highest mountain in the world, 30,000 feet. Jesus has reached the top and his footsteps are there in the snow.

And Paul says, I'm walking in the footsteps of Jesus. I'm only maybe at 1,000 feet, a long way for me to reach 30,000 feet. I've not reached there.

But I'm following Christ. Now he says, you see my footsteps behind me? Now you may be at 100 feet. See my footsteps, Paul says.

And you'll be able to follow Christ because I'm following Christ. And those of us who are older and mature parents, that's what we've got to tell our children. Learn daddy and mommy are an example for you.

How we should speak. How we should behave. And as they grow older, how we should handle money, how we should be upright.

How we should forgive others. How we should love those who hate us. How we should stop gossiping.

Backbiting. Follow me. Every father and mother should be able to say that to their children.

Follow me as I'm following Christ. See my footsteps. We're not perfect yet.

We haven't reached the top of the mountain. That's what I mean by being perfect. But we're moving on.

We're not in the same place we were in last year. We moved a few steps further than we were in last year. It's a little better.

Not perfect yet. Next year will be still better. But it won't be better if I'm not pressing on.

So, Paul, since Paul is an example, let's learn something from his life. How to live always in God's presence. See what Paul says in Acts 24, and verse 16.

I do my best. It's a beautiful expression Paul says. It doesn't say I'm perfect.

But I do my best to maintain again that word, always. What does he do his best always to have? A conscience without blame. Before God and before men.

You see, there are certain sins we commit only before God, like in our thoughts. You have a thought. You haven't hurt anybody.

But you sinned before God if it's a bad thought. If it's a dirty thought. A sinful thought.

Or you have an attitude towards somebody which even your husband or wife can't see. It's an inner attitude. A prejudice against God.

A sinful attitude. And we have a clear conscience before God. Or you're doing something with the wrong motive.

Nobody sees it. The action itself is excellent. And people appreciate you.

But you've got a wrong motive. That's a sin before God. Or you become a little proud that people appreciate what you have done.

Oh! People think I did me because I did that. Or I preached that sermon which blessed them. And that little inner pride has come to me.

I'll tell you honestly. And I fight it and I hate it as soon as I see it and it gets better and better. Like I say with Paul I'm not perfect but I'm pressing on.

Believe me, I'm pressing on. And if you do that you'll go higher and higher in the mountain. But if you don't do that, you'll be stuck in the same place year after year after year defeated in the same place year after year after year.

It's like your children sitting in grade 1 for 20 years. You wouldn't want your child to sit in grade 1 for 20 years. You wouldn't want your child to sit in grade 1 for even 1 year more.

1 year is the maximum. The next year they should be on. You don't want your child to sit in the same grade for 2 years.

We shouldn't be in the same place virtually for 2 years. We should be moving on. And the way he says is I keep my conscience blameless always.

That's something we can easily do. It's not like asking us to jump over a 10 foot wall. All it means is if a thorn gets into your foot pull it out immediately.

Is that difficult? Is that an impossible command? If a speck gets into your eye get somebody to blow it out pour some water and put it out immediately. Don't keep on. Keep it there.

As soon as you get hurt with a thorn pull it out immediately. That's what I see as a blameless conscience. I'm pricked by a thorn in my skin or by the Holy Spirit in my conscience.

Set it right immediately. Have you ever waited whenever you got pricked by a thorn for time to let me think about it and meditate on whether I should remove it or not. Or argue about whether somebody pushed me and that's why that thorn gave it to me.

It doesn't matter who pushed you. The thorn is not in your foot. Don't blame anybody else.

Get rid of it. Even if an ant is biting you, get rid of it. I don't allow that ant to remain there.

Keep your conscience clear 24-7. Always means 24-7. That is how we can live in God's presence all the time.

It's not that difficult. But determine that you want this life. Let this be a day when your life is turned around.

Say, Lord, I'm going to pursue this life. Even if it takes a long time to get there, I'm going to get there. And never give up.

Don't change your mind one week from now. I'm going to keep my conscience blameless before God. That's one.

And before men. That means if I hurt somebody, I want to apologize to that person as soon as possible. Can you remember when was the last time you said sorry to somebody? Or to your wife? Or to your husband? Can you think of times when you knew you should say it? And you found so difficult for those words to come out of your mouth.

Can you think of such a time? And you claim to be a better Christian than those other Christians in the denominations who are not born again. You say, I'm a born again Christian. Better than those who are not born again.

I find it difficult to say sorry to my husband or to my wife. I struggle with it. I'll tell you the truth.

You will not be able to live in the presence of the Lord all of this. You just won't. You can listen to any number of sermons, but you will not live in the presence of the Lord all of this.

You've got to humble yourself. Keep your conscience before God. That's easy.

It's very easy to confess our inner sins to God who nobody knows about. Now one would think that it should be more difficult to confess a sin to a holy God than to confess our failure to another fallen human being like myself. That person is a few fallen human being and I'm a fallen human being.

It should be easy to confess our sin to each other because we're both in this low level. But we think we can confess to God Almighty who's so holy. We're fooling ourselves.

We think we're confessing to God. If you find it difficult to confess to a human being, I would seriously question whether your confession to God is genuine. How can it be that you can't confess to a fallen human being like yourself when you say you're confessing to a holy God? There's a lot of Christians

fooling themselves and I don't want to fool myself.

I don't want to one day stand before the Lord and discover that I've fooled myself for most of my Christian life. That's why I speak these things straight. And I'm speaking things I've discovered in my own life.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you cannot confess to man, to a human being, ask yourself whether you're really confessing to God or just saying some pious words. And that's why you keep on falling into those sins. Those same things come in your thoughts again and again and again and again and again.

Because you're not really confessing to God. You're just thinking that you're confessing to God. Because it's a silent thing, you think it's real.

No, it's not. The test is can you confess to a human being who is sinful. So that's another always.

This was not possible in the old government. In the old government, it was once a week Sabbath. One day a week, just keep your life holy.

In the new government, it is a perpetual Sabbath. Every day. Always.

Always in the presence of God. Here is another New Testament passage. These verses will be found in the New Testament.

You will not find it in the Old Testament. Keep your conscience always clear. Never in the Old Testament.

Impossible. Because they didn't have the Holy Spirit. That's why I say most Christians are living in the Old Testament.

They're living just as if they didn't have the Holy Spirit. They imagine they have. Okay, take another verse.

1 Thessalonians 5 1 Thessalonians 5 Verse 17 Pray without ceasing. Pray always. Jesus also said that in Luke 18 Verse 1 What does it mean to pray always? It doesn't mean I have to be on my knees.

Most of the time, we can't be on our knees. We can't be on our knees beyond a certain length of time. It's not being on your knees.

Praying always means what? In the middle of our work? When we're lying in bed? Anytime we're awake, we should be praying. And if you keep doing that all the time and you understand how to do it you'll find that even when you're asleep your spirit is in communion with God. It's a wonderful thing.

That'll save you from dirty dreams and save you from fearful dreams. All human beings have either dirty dreams or fearful dreams or both. Jesus never had them.

Do you want to be like Jesus? I've discovered one thing. A lot of my dreams are dependent on how I think during the day. If I think pure thoughts loving thoughts humble thoughts seeking to live in God's presence during the day it'll make a tremendous difference from the dreams I have at night.

Any kind of ideas to pray, Lord let even my dreams be found on holy ground. Pray always means an attitude of communion with God all the time. It's related to having a clear conscience.

I'm not saying anything. I'm not saying, Lord most people's prayer is, I want this, I want that, give me this, give me that eat me and get rid of this and solve this problem for me It's always asking God for something

or the other. Yeah, there's nothing wrong in that.

God is a father who loves to give us what we need and if we have a problem, the right person to go to is God, certainly. And I would never discourage you from that. What a friend we have in Jesus.

Everything is taken to God in prayer. But prayer is not just asking God for this, that and the other. It's fellowship with God.

It's talking to Him and more than talking to Him, listening to Him. I used to wonder, what did Jesus do when it says He would go out and spend hours in prayer? Many times the scripture reads, sometimes you pray all night or go out in the wilderness, spend long hours in prayer and I said, Lord, what were you praying? Was He telling God all the things He needed in His life or what was happening around Him? Was He telling Father, this is happening here, that's happening there? Father said, I already know it, you don't have to tell me all that. What was He doing then? But for myself, this is the answer I got.

That 99% of the time Jesus was listening more than talking. And I'll tell you how I got that answer. Because I'm trying to find out this question of prayer always means what Jesus went and would spend hours in prayer.

I would find that even a few minutes if I started praying something, my mind would get distracted. In fact, in the early days I found that as soon as I knelt down to pray, I'd remember all the things I needed to do or haven't done. In fact, I told people, if you ever want to discover what all you haven't done, just kneel down to pray.

Keep your mind of all the things you need to do or haven't done. And I said, Lord, there's something wrong here. And I discovered that Jesus was not telling God this, that, and the other.

The Father would say, I already know that. He was listening. Because He said, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father.

Not proceeded, but proceeds. Matthew 4.4. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of present tense, present continuous tense, that proceeds from the Father. That means God is still speaking.

He spoke in the Bible. But if I read it, He can still speak to me through it. And He can, when I get used to the Bible, the Lord speaking to me through the Bible, He will speak to me without the Bible as well.

At other times, directly. That's what all of us need to come into that life. Man shall not live by bread alone.

Is there a single day you'll go without food? Maybe you'll fast sometimes. But we can't live without food. We need it every day.

And man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father. So we need to hear that. That's how we are to live.

Those are the first spoken words of Jesus in His ministry. So value that. Lord, that's how I want to live.

And that's, to me, that's my understanding of praying. Praying is communion with God. And I'll tell you how I learned that it is listening more than speaking.

When I was a young Christian, and if I went to a more godly person or I spoke to a more godly person on a telephone, only I had one hour with that person. A really godly person. I was a young, new Christian, 20 years old.

I'm speaking to this godly 60-year-old man who's walked with God for years. Tell me, who would do most of the speaking? I'd have to be a very arrogant person if I did most of the speaking. I'd let him speak more because he's more godly and there's a lot more I can learn from him.

On a phone, if you hear me speaking to some person, spiritual things, and I'm listening more than I'm speaking, you will immediately conclude I'm speaking to a more godly man. On the other hand, if you find that out of one hour of conversation, I'm speaking 55 minutes, you'll be absolutely sure that person is a younger Christian. Right? Same with you.

That's how I learned that when I'm speaking to someone more godly than me, I listen. When I'm speaking to someone who's less godly than me, I tell him. Many people treat God as though He's less godly and that's why you talk more than you listen.

That's how I learned it. You talk more than you listen because you don't respect God for who He is. You have to tell Him 101 things.

This, that, this, that, and the other, and then you say Amen. That's not how Jesus prayed. And I'm very thankful that I discovered it.

Because very often when I tell God something, God says, I already know it. Of course, we pray for one another. God already knows, but we express our fellowship there and He's given us the privilege of asking, why does God ask us to pray for something? So that we have the joy of an answered prayer.

For example, if God healed your child without your praying, He would do it very well. You wouldn't have the joy of knowing that my Heavenly Father answered my prayer. But your child was sick and you prayed for that.

And the child was healed. You have the joy of saying, I prayed and God answered. That's why God wants you to express it in prayer.

Not because He didn't know your child was sick. Not because He didn't care that your child was sick. He does care and He knows, but He wants you to pray.

And He wants you to persist in prayer. Because He wants you to believe that He's a loving Father. And He wants to have more fellowship with you.

He says, come back to me, come back to me. Knock again, knock again, ask again. I'll give it to you.

And I'll give you something better than you asked for. He always gives us something better. Not the way we think it is.

But always something better. So, let's learn this way of praying. The way Jesus prayed.

Whenever you talk to God in prayer, ask yourself one question. Are you talking to someone who is more spiritual than you are? Or less spiritual than you are? That's all you need to ask. And if he is more spiritual than God is, then who should be doing more of the talking? I'm thankful that I learned that.

I'm still learning. The other thing we have to do all the time is verse 16. Rejoice always.

That's not possible in the old covenant. They did Sabbath once a week. Once a week you come to the temple and clap and shout and beat the drums and blow the trumpets and praise the Lord and rejoice in His presence.

The remaining six days do what you like. Go and complain and grumble and do what you like. But don't forget in the Sabbath, come back and stay with us.

But now we are in a perpetual Sabbath and it says rejoice always. And that's made more clear in Philippians 4 that we rejoice it's explained, we compare scripture with scripture when you don't understand one scripture go to another scripture that explains it. So I get rejoice always explained more clearly in Philippians 4 where it says rejoice in the Lord always.

I can't rejoice in my circumstances always because circumstances may not be very good. For example, if I had a serious injury or a sickness, I don't rejoice in my sickness. There's no virtue in rejoicing in some sickness you have.

You pray for healing. I believe you should pray always for healing. But in the Lord, always because He never changes.

My physical circumstances, my medical situation may change. So I can't always rejoice in it. The Lord is not unrealistic.

Rejoice in the Lord, He never changes. That's why I can rejoice in Him always. Even if I can't understand His ways of dealing with me.

Don't think that God always answers prayer for healing. Paul was the greatest saint of his lifetime. In his lifetime.

And he had a sickness that bothered him so much he called it a messenger of Satan. Have you ever had a sickness which you feel is directly from the devil afflicting your body? Paul had one. It was definitely from the devil.

And that's the man who writes here, rejoice in the Lord always. And he said the other verse, for in case you may think I made a mistake. Again I say, I meant what I said, rejoice.

Philippians 4.4 But those of you who are not familiar with 2 Corinthians let me read that to you. 2 Corinthians chapter 12 Sickness is not something we're going to have in eternity. But for some reason he allows it on the earth.

And I don't believe that every believer's sickness is going to be healed. We must pray for it. And God keeps us healthy generally speaking.

But Paul, a far greater saint than any of us sitting here says, he got in verse 7, 2 Corinthians 12.7, a thorn in the flesh. See the way he describes it. A thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan that tormented him.

Have any of you had a sickness that torments you? Torment is a very strong word. Torments. The margin of my mind says it.

It's like somebody whipping Paul. Whipping, whipping, whipping. That's the word.

Tormenting him. Whipping him, whipping him. And he says I implored the Lord, verse 8. You know the meaning of implored? Implored is more than asked.

And he said, Lord please do this for me. Get rid of this. It's from the devil.

Verse 7, a messenger of Satan is tormenting me. It's like a perpetual thorn that I cannot take out of my flesh. Please get rid of it.

No answer. Verse 9, 8. The second time I prayed, no answer. The third time I prayed, no answer.

The fourth time, the Lord said no. I'm not going to take it off. Can you believe the Lord? Don't fall.

I'm not going to heal your sickness. Lord, it's from Satan. Verse 7, it's a messenger of Satan.

No. You've got to keep it. And I'm trying to figure out what was the sickness.

I'm a curious type of person. Especially if it's in the Bible. If there's an answer in the Bible, I want to find it.

If there's no answer in the Bible, I say forget it. And there is. And I'll tell you.

See, you've got to confess Scripture to Scripture. In Acts chapter 16 I mentioned this many times, you've probably heard me say it. But in Acts 16, it says here, Paul was planning to go to Bithynia, verse 7. No, before Bithynia, he was planning to go to Asia.

Asia is not the Asia we know today. It is known as Asia Minor, a small part of Turkey. That's where he was planning to go.

Acts 16, verse 6. Passing through Phrygia, passing through the Galatians. Galatia was a state with many, many towns. Having been, I was going to go to Asia.

That's what my goal was, to go to Asia. But the Holy Spirit stopped me. The Holy Spirit stopped me where? I was in Galatia, verse 6. I was going passing through Galatia on my way to Asia, and the Holy Spirit stopped me in Galatia.

So my question is, how did the Holy Spirit stop him? Was it a vision? No, it was not something spectacular like that. It was through a sickness. He got sick in Galatia, so he had to stay there.

He could not move on. He could not travel. And that's written in Galatians chapter 4. In Galatians chapter 4, it says, in verse 13, you will know that it was through a body illness that I preached the Gospel to you the first time.

We learn a lot of things when we compare Scripture with Scripture. Paul is saying, I was planning to go to Asia Minor, that part of Turkey. And I was only passing through Galatia.

I had no desire to stay in Galatia. But I got sick there. And I couldn't travel.

And the Lord said, I want you to preach in Galatia. That's how there were churches in Galatia, and that's why he wrote the letter to the Galatians. There would have been no letter to the Galatians if Paul had not fallen sick there.

There would have been no churches in Galatia because Paul planned for something else. It's wonderful when God stops us somewhere by sickness. I've experienced once, not by sickness, but I remember once I went to a certain country in the Arabian Gulf just to visit two brothers from India who were there.

And I was only going to pass through there to go to another city, another country rather. So I thought, when I'm there, I'll be there just two days, and I'll get a visa and go to this other country. But I couldn't go through.

I got stuck there. Because I discovered that a big Muslim festival was going on and all the consulates were closed. I couldn't get a visa.

I was stuck there for many days. And I said, okay, I'm stuck. Let's have some meetings.

So I had some meetings and invited different people. And today there's a flourishing church there. How did it come? Because I couldn't get a visa to go out.

I had no intention to be there and have meetings. So Paul did something like that. He had no intention to stay in Galatia.

And he got stuck. And it was this, I had this bodily illness. And he said something about this bodily illness.

It was something that would make other people look at this word, loathe. L-O-A-T-H-E. It's not a word we use much in English nowadays.

But we use a word like detest. Something repulsive. He said, I had something in my body which normally speaking would make people feel repelled to see it.

It was a trial to you. But in spite of this, something in his body that repelled people. And he tells us what it is.

He says, you were willing verse 15, to pluck out your eyes and give them to me. So from that I conclude that repulsive thing was not some inward cancer or something which you don't even know whether he has it. Or a stomach ache or a headache or something not visible.

It was something visible. Something in his eyes. I mean there was some type of pus coming out of his eyes while he was speaking which he couldn't control.

Repulsive. You see a man speaking up there, there's always some pus coming out of his eyes. He's always saying, wipe it, wipe it, wipe it.

There's something repulsive about it. And Paul felt, Lord, this is a messenger of Satan. This is not from God.

It's such a trial. It's like a thorn in the flesh. Heal me.

And the Lord said, no. That's what he prayed. The Lord said to Paul, the reason is this is to keep you humble.

You are such a mighty apostle, Paul. You've healed the sick. You've raised the dead.

You've written scripture. You've planted churches all over in so many places. And so many elders respect you.

You're a highly respected apostle in Christendom. You are in tremendous danger of getting puffed up and thinking that you're somebody. And you need something.

You don't have people at your level of maturity to rebuke you and correct you. Everyone is a younger person. You need something to keep you humble.

And therefore I have allowed this. It will remain with you till you die. It will keep you humble.

And that's more important because only if you're humble I can give you grace. You may have this pus in your eyes, but you'll have an anointing on your life. Which do you want? Paul said, I want the anointing.

Then you need to keep this in permanent. So it didn't stop him from rejoicing, always in the Lord, even though he had this sickness. So this was Paul's life.

He always wanted to pray. He always wanted to rejoice in the Lord's presence. And then I want to just mention one or two other things.

It says in Colossians chapter 4, verse 6 you find that word always coming up again. Very related to our daily life. Let your speech always be with grace.

And the people who listen to you the most whoever they are usually your family members. They're the ones who listen to your speech always. The others hear you once a week or twice a week.

But who are the ones who listen to your speech always, every day? Those in your home, those in your office perhaps. Let your speech always be with grace. What a testament if it can be like that.

There's no such command in the Old Testament. There's nothing in the Old Testament about how we should speak always with grace. That is why I say most good believers are living in the Old Testament.

The standard of life is Old Testament standard of life. And they're very happy with it. In the Old Testament there's in the list of commandments, you shall not kill, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not worship idols.

There is no commandment saying you shall not be angry. There's no commandment saying you shall not lust after women. Just don't commit adultery and don't kill anybody.

I tell you most believers I've met are living in the Old Testament. Their standard is not the New Testament commandments. It's the Ten Commandments.

And they think they are very good Christians. I haven't killed anybody. I don't commit adultery.

I don't tell lies. I don't cheat. It's Old Testament, brother.

In the New Testament it is. Don't get angry. Don't lust after women.

Let your speech always be with grace. I'm not saying this to condemn anybody. I faced up to all these things myself and I said it is not true in my life.

That's the first thing I have to say. And I said it honestly to the Lord. Lord it is not true in my life.

And that was the first step. And I said Lord I want it to be true. I won't get there overnight but little by little by little I want to come to the place where I will never be in a bad mood any time any day.

Because if I am, my speech will not be in grace. You've got to go behind the reason for the speech not being grace. I'm meditating on something that brought me into a bad mood.

Beware of that. Beware of that. Let your speech always be with grace.

And he says it compares it to salt in the food. You know how salt in the food is? One spoon in your mouth immediately you know there is no salt there. It's like that when there is no grace in speech.

You don't have to listen for five minutes. One sentence there is no salt there. This is not to judge other people.

We are not called here to judge. I know a lot of people who don't have grace in their speech. Forget it.

The Bible says God is the judge of all people. And one of the clear commands of that is don't go around judging other people. Judge yourself.

See if there is salt in your food. You are so careful. You know the two pictures that the Lord used which was the sacrifice of the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

What is common about salt and light? You meditate on scripture. When I read these things I meditate. I say Lord you said salt and light.

What is common about salt and light? I'll tell you what I discovered. You know immediately whether it is there or not. In food as soon as you put one spoon in your mouth you know immediately if there is salt or not.

Immediately if there is light or not. It doesn't take time. It doesn't even take five seconds.

You know whether there is light or not immediately. You put food in your mouth you know immediately. It's like that.

Salt and light. Whether there is salt in your speech. Another question when you see salt in other people's speech.

Forget it. Is there salt in your speech? Is there grace in your speech? Everything I've said today is not for us to find out okay this is how that person should be. That's how Pharisees are.

This is how you should be. I can make a list of ten names of people I know who don't have salt in their speech. Forget it.

Forget it. Or to say my husband and wife. You've been describing my husband and wife exactly today.

You got on the wrong track already. Do you know who is called the accuser of others in the Bible? The devil. Revelation 12.10. He does not accuse the unbelievers.

They are already in his lap. It says he accuses the believers. What else does it say about him? How often does he accuse them? Do you know the verse? 24 hours.

Revelation 12.10. He accuses believers 24 hours. And he's glad to have co-workers. And if you want to hold hands with me the devil says.

And the number of believers who say yes. Satan I'd like to hold hands with you. I know a few people I can point out a few faults in this person and that person.

Go ahead. Go ahead accuse them. The devil says go right ahead.

I want a lot of co-workers. I don't have enough. I mean all the unbelievers already helped me.

I'd be delighted if I could have a few believers helping me too. In finding fault with this person. Especially if you can get them to find fault with their husband and wife.

Wow. Then I'd have accomplished to destroy their home. Because when I destroy their home I destroy their children.

The standards of the New Testament are impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit. So the purpose of God giving us these commands is to make us cry out day and night say Lord give me a spirit filled life. Give me a spirit filled life.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father we pray that you will not allow us to be discouraged but encourage that it is your will that you will give us this life. Your call to us is not to condemn us but your call to us is saying come up higher my son come up higher my daughter.

I want to give you a life such as you've never experienced so far and I want you to believe today it is possible for you even for you. Help us Lord each one. We know you can help every one of us.

The weakest among us you'll be ready to help first of all. Thank you in Jesus name. Amen.

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