

The Call of God - the Call to Holiness

by Zac Poonen

The new covenant gives us a holiness that is genuine and from deep within, making us free, cheerful, and happy.

Duration: 1:01:19

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 4:24, Hebrews 8:7, Hebrews 8:10

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man who has been struggling with a lizard-like creature that represents a sinful desire. The man is torn between wanting to get rid of it and being afraid of the pain that will come with its removal. Eventually, he gives permission for the creature to be taken away, and it transforms into a beautiful horse. The speaker emphasizes the importance of honesty and surrendering to God in order to live a holy life. He also highlights how the law cannot bring true holiness, but it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that genuine transformation occurs.

Transcript

There was something that God could never do for people under the law. I mentioned that verse earlier in Romans 8.3 which says, what the law could not do, God did. One of the things that the law could not do, was to make us holy inside.

It could make a man holy on the outside and externally he would be alright. But the law could never do anything with the inside. And that is what God did through Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant.

And here we read in Hebrews 12, that the reason why God disciplines us, in verse 10 the last part, He disciplines us for our good, that we may partake or share His holiness. Now there is a lot of difference between my becoming holy through a technique or gritting my teeth or denying myself or taking up the cross and partaking of His holiness. There is a lot of difference.

One is what I manufacture and the other is what He gives me, I receive from Him. Now here is where a lot of Christians have gone wrong. They believe that justification is by faith, but sanctification is by works.

Many years ago, we hear of the Reformation and the great cry of the Reformation was, justification is by faith. For hundreds of years before that, most people believed justification was by works. Today we understand that any amount of works cannot forgive even one of our sins.

I don't think any of us have got any doubt on that. I hope not. We know that it's got to be by faith and the blood of Jesus cleanses us.

But we do believe that by works we can make ourselves holy. We need another Reformation to understand that sanctification is by faith too. It doesn't mean we've got to do nothing.

If man had to do nothing for forgiveness of sins, the whole world would be forgiven. Why is it more than 90% of the world's sins are not forgiven? So faith doesn't mean man's got to do nothing. They have to repent, they have to believe, then they are forgiven.

But it's not as a result of their works. In the same way here, forgiveness is God's gift. Eternal life is also God's gift.

And eternal life does not mean a life that never ends. That's how many understand it. Eternal means something that never had a beginning and never ends.

Who's got that life? Holy God. So eternal life is not a phrase which means I get a life that never ends. But I get that life which never had a beginning and never had an end, which means I get the life of God.

And it's so clear in that well-known verse, Romans 6.23, the gift of God is eternal life. It's a gift. I have to take it.

I have to receive it. There are certain conditions to receive it, but I'll never be able to manufacture it. And I believe that the reason why God kept the Israelites under the law for 1500 years was as it were to show that no matter how much you try, you'll never be able to make it.

You'll never, never be able to make it. You can try and try a little harder and you'll never be able to make it. And God was waiting to see how many people were honest to acknowledge that they hadn't made it.

And that's why He gave ten commandments. And have you noticed? How many of you have noticed it? I never noticed it for more than 25 years of my Christian life after being born again that nine of those commandments dealt with our external life and one, the last one, dealt with our inner life. And you could keep all those nine commandments, have only Him as God, worship no idols, and don't take the Lord's name in vain, and keep the Sabbath day holy, honor your father and mother, don't steal, don't lie, don't give bare false witness, and don't commit adultery, don't murder, and that's it.

And when it came to the tenth one, don't desire, don't covet, don't lust, nobody could keep it. But they had to be honest to acknowledge that they couldn't keep it. And I feel that this was the reason I have understood why God put that tenth commandment.

He knew nobody could keep it. But He wanted to see how many people would be honest enough to acknowledge it. You know, the Apostle Paul said in one place that according to the righteousness of the law, in Philippians 3, 9 he says, not 3, 9, Philippians 3, verse 6, he says according to the righteousness which is in the God's law, I was blameless.

And in another place, he says in Acts chapter 23, that, verse 1, I have lived my life, just listen to the testimony of this man. Paul said, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God until this day. From childhood.

He was an amazing man. A God-fearing person from childhood. He had lived with a good conscience, a perfectly good conscience before God up to that day.

But the same man says in Romans chapter 7, this man who says he has kept all the law, here you see his honesty, he says, but when the law said, in verse 7, the last part of Romans 7, 7, that you shall not covet, you shall not lust, you shall not desire after your neighbor's wife or your neighbor's daughter or your neighbor's house or your neighbor's maidservant or your neighbor's servant or property or slave or anything, he said, that sin produced in me lusting of every type. He couldn't keep the tenth commandment. He says he discovered every type of lust.

Now when we think of lust, we just think of sexually dirty thoughts, but there are many other types of lust. Lust for the honor of men, lust for money, lust for power. There are many, many lusts, desires.

And he says, I discovered when I heard this commandment, you shall not lust. There were every type of lust he discovered in his heart and he couldn't keep it. And yet he said, I've lived with a perfectly good conscience before God.

It was only according to those first nine commandments that anybody could live. And those, keeping those first nine commandments produced a man who was a good man on the outside, a religious person who kept all the rules and regulations and looked pious and nice on the outside. And inside his heart could be every type of lust.

And the man would be considered holy in Israel. But it's this which the law could not do. The law could not help a man to keep the tenth commandment.

It could help him only to keep nine commandments. And if man didn't change on the inside, God's purposes would never be accomplished. And so God gave 1,500 years for man to try and keep the tenth commandment and he couldn't keep it.

But there were a few like Paul, very few, who were honest and said, Lord, I'm not able to keep it. Most people are not honest. Most people gain a testimony before men because they keep the externals of the law or commandments.

And every church has got its own set of rules and regulations as to what's right and what's wrong and we keep all that and we get a good testimony. Just like the Pharisees in the synagogues. But in the midst of those Pharisees, there'll be a Paul who's honest.

And in the midst of all these religious Christians who sit in churches and who got a good testimony before men, you may find one or two honest people who say, Lord, but I'm not keeping it inside. And that's what the Lord wants. That's what the law could not do.

And that's what we read in Romans 8.3 what the law could not do, God did. And that's because Paul cried out and said, Oh, I know. I want to do this.

I want to do. I want to be pure in my heart. But I can't do it.

The good that I wish, verse 19, I don't do. I want to be pure, but I can't. Who shall deliver me? And then he says in chapter 8, verse 2, the law of the Spirit.

Different from the law of Moses. There was the law of Moses, which couldn't do it for me. But the law of the Holy Spirit.

And the law of the Holy Spirit is not a new set of rules. It is life in Christ Jesus. That's the law of the Spirit.

It's clear there. What is the law of the Spirit? You got the answer there. It's not a word.

It's not a commandment. It's not a bunch of rules and regulations. It's life.

The Holy Spirit comes to make us partakers of God's holiness through giving us the life of Jesus Christ. And that sets me free from the law of sin and death. That is what the next verse he says what the law could not do, God did.

And then, this requirement of the law, verse 4. Now you got to understand this. You probably never understood this before. Romans 8, 4. Now the requirement of the law, which is what? You shall not desire, covet.

Is now fulfilled inside us. Which could never be fulfilled in all these 1500 years. Which could never be fulfilled under the old covenant.

Which could never be fulfilled by any amount of religion and gritting our teeth or determination or sacrifice or anything. Life in Christ Jesus comes in and that requirement is fulfilled inside us. Because we respond now to the promptings of the Spirit.

So that's why until the Holy Spirit came, this was impossible. Until the Holy Spirit came to dwell within, until people were filled with the Holy Spirit within, it was impossible. But when the Holy Spirit came within, man could become holy from within.

Man could desire God's will and do God's will. The Bible says, He works in us both to will and to do God's good pleasure. That's in Philippians 2. And the terms of the new covenant you read in Hebrews chapter 8 very clearly.

He says the days are coming, you know this old covenant, I don't know whether you know that the Bible itself says that old covenant was faulty. Now it almost sounds blasphemous to say that what God gave was faulty. But that's what it says in Hebrews 8.7 that if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant.

There would have been no need for a new covenant if the old covenant was okay. Then you say why did God make the old covenant? Did He give something and then realize it was a mistake and produce a new model or something like that? No. He knew all along this will never make man holy.

I know it, but man doesn't know it. So I'll let him try. Let him try.

And you know all of us when we come to Christ, we go through that. We try to be holy. Well, I hope it doesn't take 1500 years.

I hope we'll learn sooner than that that we can't be holy no matter how much you try. You can try. Many of us have tried.

Have you succeeded? You tried to control your tongue? You made a resolution on the first of January? How long did it last? Till the 6th of January perhaps? Or 7th? If you have a little more determination maybe till the 30th of January. That's it. No, it doesn't work.

But when will we learn? And I can't make it. Some people just give up and say it's impossible. Oh, these standards are unattainable.

That's exactly what the devil wants you to say. This is impossible. I tried.

I tried so many times. I went to so many meetings. I came forward.

I came to the altar. I prayed and people laid hands on me and all types of things happened. But I'm still defeated.

I speak in tongues but I can't control my tongue. Yeah, that's... There's something faulty in that covenant. But finding fault with it, verse 8, God says, Now the days are coming and I'll make a new covenant.

And in this new covenant, it says it's not going to be like the old covenant, verse 9. Because they could not, did not continue in that covenant, the last part of verse 9. But this is the covenant, verse 10. What is it? And notice this. The old covenant was, Thou shalt.

Thou shalt. Thou shalt not. Thou shalt.

That's the old covenant's terms. And you go to any church, they've got their unwritten Thou shalt. Thou shalt not.

Touch not. Taste not. Handle not.

Dress codes. What we're to have in our house. How big our house should be.

How small it should be. It's all, it's not written down anywhere. We're very careful that we don't get caught for these things.

So we don't write it down. But, it's there. Unwritten laws by which we assess our own holiness and our own spirituality.

And worst of all, that we assess other people's spirituality and holiness. Unwritten laws. Multitudes of them.

We haven't learned what God tried to teach the Israelites for 1500 years that you just cannot make people holy like that. You can get them looking nice on the outside. Sure.

You can build a home where all the children look nice, dress nice, behave properly to the visitors and get up in the morning and read their Bibles and the horses needn't trim. You haven't made them holy. No.

It's an inner thing. It's not external. And we can easily be fooled by all these external things.

And I tell you, very often, we want our children to live godly lives because we want honor in the church. Oh, look how good my children are. And when they do something bad, we're not worried that the name of Jesus is dishonored.

Oh, my name is... What will people say? Because they've broken some unwritten law in this church. They dressed in a particular way which commandment number 5614 says you should not do that. They violated that law and that's the thing.

And God's all the time looking in the midst of all these Pharisees who have a good testimony in the church for one Paul who says, Lord, there's such a lot of lusting in my heart for the honor of man always seeking my own. Wretched man that I am. Will you deliver me? And the Lord says, Yes, deliverance.

Sure. But it's not in thou shalt and thou shalt not and thou shalt and thou shalt not. See the contrast here in verse 10.

I will. I will. I will.

You see the difference? In Hebrews 8.10 I will put my laws into your minds. I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God.

That's the new covenant. But when will we learn it? That God has to do a work inside us. So many of us we look nice on the outside.

You heard that story of the little boy who was asked to sit down and wouldn't sit down and when the dad took the stick finally sat down and said, By daddy, inside I am still standing up. That's what the law could do. If there was a stick which made that fellow sit down or dress in a particular way because he could be excommunicated.

That's a pretty heavy stick. If you didn't do a particular thing, if you didn't behave in a particular way, if you didn't speak in a particular way OK, you managed to get them to dress that way and speak that way and read the Bible in the mornings and pray half an hour and do everything. But what about inside? They love Jesus with all their hearts.

It's all for the honor of men. The law could not do it. And God is looking in this crowd of religious, holy people for one man, one woman who will be honest and say, Lord, it's not inside.

You know the thoughts in my mind and what all goes on in my heart. You know how I speak in private. You know the things in my life which other people don't know.

And that's the man and woman God leads to a holy life. That's the man and woman in whom God writes His laws in their heart and in their mind. That's the number one thing God is looking for.

A man or a woman will be honest like Paul to say, I can't make it. No matter how much I try. Lord, You do it in me.

That's what the Lord was trying to teach when those disciples went fishing all night. And the Lord knew right from the beginning that they were never going to get any fish. Why did He allow them to struggle? I don't know if they went at 6 o'clock in the evening till 5 o'clock next morning.

Eleven hours struggling, struggling. It's like those 1500 years of law trying, trying, this side, that side, that end of the lake of Galilee, this end, that end, the other end. It was like those 1500 years.

They just couldn't make it. And who said Jesus didn't have a sense of humor? He comes in the morning. He says, well, have you fellas caught any fish? He knew they didn't have.

OK, he says. Have you come to an end of yourselves? Yes. You're ready to go home? Yes.

Ready to give up? Yes. OK. Now you're ready to have victory.

Now you're ready to have what I can do for you. Put your net on the right side and it says they got such a catch they've never caught so many fish in all their life. That is the new covenant.

That's what He was trying to teach them. But He says, you've got to come to an end of yourself first. And do you know what God's waiting for? He's waiting for people to come to an end of themselves.

People are sick and tired of this religion that gives them a good name before people. Sick and tired of trying to raise our children to get a good name in the church. Say, Lord I couldn't care less what they think of my children.

I want my children to be free and to love you with all their hearts and to grow up to live for the glory of God. And I don't care what X, Y or Z talks about them. It'll make a lot of difference.

And your children will be happier children too. I'll tell you that. Ask yourself how many things, how many decisions you've made concerning what you dress, what you have in your home, what you buy and how you dress your children and so many things.

The back of your mind you've got this, what are people in my church going to say? It's not the glory of God. You know, you go to a house and there's, maybe you've got an expensive painting there. And then, when you come in there, you may have to explain, you know, well, suddenly somebody gave me this.

What for? I never asked any questions. Is this, is this sealing? That's some rule number 6065 or something like that. You must not have anything like that in your house.

Who said that? Is there a verse like that? It's Revelation chapter 23. Let's turn to Revelation chapter 23. Found it? It's a big chapter.

Many, many verses. The biggest chapter in the Bible. All types of rules and regulations that have come up in 2000 years to make people holy.

It doesn't work. Jesus has come to set us free. To make us partakers of His holiness.

That holiness, you know, in Ephesians chapter 4, it speaks about, in verse 22, 24, sorry. Ephesians 4, 24, the holiness of truth. In a paraphrase of that verse, in Philip's paraphrase of that verse, it says, the holiness which is no illusion.

And I believe that's what God wants to give us. A holiness which is not an illusion. Which is not put on.

Which is genuine. From deep within. That the law can never do it.

A million rules and regulations can never do it. But when the law of the spirit takes over, life in Christ Jesus. It's a holiness which makes a man free.

Cheerful. Happy. And there's no strain in it.

A lot of people, their holiness is a constant strain. To live this life, it's always a strain. When you're trying to impress people.

I see that Jesus warned his disciples about three types of leaven. I don't have time to show you all those verses, you can look up a concordance and find it. The leaven of the Pharisees, the leaven of the Sadducees, and the leaven of the Herodians.

And these were the characteristics of these people. The Pharisees were people who had all their doctrines absolutely right. Jesus said in Matthew 23 verse 2 and 3, everything that the Pharisees say to you, do it.

You know he said that? How could he ever say that if their doctrines were wrong? He told his disciples to do every single thing which the Pharisees taught. All that they say unto you, do. They were the fundamentalists, the evangelicals of that day.

And then you have the second group, which are the Sadducees. They were the liberals, you know, people who didn't believe in the resurrection and miracles and angels and spirits and visions and all these things. This is all nonsense.

They were humanists. They were people who didn't believe in the supernatural. And we have that category of Christians today too, liberals.

And then you have the Herodians, who had links with Herod, the political, the right wing people who are in touch with political leaders and also supposed to be religious but very worldly, like Herod. So you have worldly Christians, liberal Christians and fundamental Christians. Now, when you see these three groups, Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians, the fundamentalists and the liberals and the worldly people, whom did Jesus criticize the most? Have you noticed that? You hardly ever see him confronting the Herodians and very rarely the Sadducees.

Most of his criticism was in the Pharisees, who had all their doctrines right. And that's got a message for us. And the one thing which Jesus said to his disciples was beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy.

Jesus spoke more against hypocrisy than he spoke against murder, adultery, worshiping idols, honoring father and mother, keeping the Sabbath, every commandment, more than all of them. He spoke about hypocrisy. Jesus emphasized certain things which are never found in the Ten Commandments.

He said, this is the sin you need to be careful of. And a hypocrite is a Greek word which means an actor. If you went to Greece 2000 years ago and spoke of a hypocrite, they'd understand that.

Hypocrite means an actor. On the stage you have hypocrites who are acting. And Jesus was saying to his disciples, don't be actors.

What does an actor do? Here's a man who's acting like, say, some biblical movie, John the Baptist. And when he comes on the stage, he's a very holy man, speaking God's word. And after the movie recording for the day is over, he goes back to his home and maybe living with his fifth wife or a drunkard and a gambler and completely different life.

And the next time when the movie starts, they start recording the movie again, back again. He's back to John the Baptist again. This is the life of an actor.

He's one thing in the movie and another thing at home. That's what Jesus was saying. You shouldn't have a double life.

Don't be one thing before people and another thing somewhere else. One thing in the church and another thing at home. One thing before people and another thing inwardly.

This is what he said. This is like 11. Now, when a person gets real holiness, he is no longer an actor.

What he is in the church, he is at home. What he is outside, he is inside. And then there is no strain.

It's a strain when we have to act like something else. Now, if I were to act all the time like a cat, well, I can manage for some time perhaps, but it would be a tremendous strain if I had to do it all the time. I mean, if you told me to act like a cat just for two hours on Sunday morning, I could manage it, but throughout the week would be very difficult.

So, if I am told to act holy just for two hours on Sunday morning, I can manage it. But to be throughout the week, boy, that's a strain. But if you tell a cat to act like a cat, oh, it's no problem at all.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, year after year. You ask a cat, is it a strain to act like a cat? Oh, no, it's my nature. Why is holiness a strain? Because we are acting.

We haven't partaken of God's holiness. We have got a holiness with rules and regulations. And since we are afraid of being rejected by men, we make sure that we never get to do anything too far that would get us thrown out of a church.

And like someone said, most people live by only one commandment, which is, thou shall not get caught. No matter what you do, thou shall not get caught. If you keep that commandment, you're okay.

That's how a lot of Christians are living. It's not holiness. It's not the new covenant.

Jesus has come to give us, when it says freedom, when the sun shall set you free, you shall be free indeed. I believe this freedom and liberty is one of the most misunderstood things in areas where people speak about the Holy Spirit. The Bible says where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

What liberty? Some people think it's liberty to dance and shout and yell and raise our hands and clap. I'm not against any of these things. I'm happy to dance before the Lord and shout and clap and lift my hands and everything, but that's not liberty because I can do those things without the Holy Spirit.

But there is another liberty which no other Spirit can give you, and that's liberty from sin. That's the liberty and that's the freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty from sin.

Now there are many things the Holy Spirit does for us. He gives us the Spirit of praise. He gives us psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in our heart that we can make melody to the Lord.

And maybe He helps us to shout and praise the Lord too. But of all the things that the Holy Spirit does, why does the Word call Him the Holy Spirit? Now when you go to many places where people speak about the Holy Spirit, you think the correct name should be noisy spirit. Is He a noisy spirit? I got filled with a noisy spirit and boy, my life became different in the meeting.

Okay? That's fine. If you got filled with a noisy spirit and you begin to raise your hands and shout and praise and all that, fine. But if you got filled with a holy spirit, what should have happened? You know what should have happened? Something inside you should have become holy.

And if that hasn't happened, any amount of noise is no substitute for that. Partakers of His holiness. Why are Christians afraid of holiness? Why are Christians afraid of the word perfection? The Bible says, let us press on to perfection.

I believe it goes back to, you know what the devil has done has given us a wrong concept of God. That's why. Now, if I were to ask you, are you afraid of words like this? Health.

Are you scared of that? Perfect health. Are you afraid of that? Hygiene. Hygienic conditions.

Perfect hygienic conditions. Why aren't we scared? Why are you scared of the opposite? Sickness. Filth.

Now, do you know holiness means health? Do you know holiness means hygiene? Spiritual hygiene. Spiritual health. Perfect health means perfection.

What do we want for ourselves? Do you want a little bit of sickness? Or no sickness? We all say we want no sickness. Why do we allow a little bit of sin to remain in our life? You think that's going to do you some good? That's why the devil has fooled us. We think that little sin is so enjoyable, and we don't realize what we're missing.

I remember a parable I read in a book many years ago. Just a man who had a pet, some type of ugly chameleon, like a lizard. One of these horrible garden lizards sitting on his shoulder, clutching onto him.

It was his pet. And here was this angel standing in front of him, and saying, shall I tear this away from you? You see, this is a picture of some little sinful habit that we have got, which we just want to keep. Not ugly things like adultery or murder.

It may be a little love of money. It may be that sweet sin of gossiping and talking about people behind their back. Something that we like to keep.

And this lizard suddenly whispers, no, no, no, I'll behave myself. Don't let him take me away from you. You know, you and I have been good friends for so many years.

And he stays there. And this man is in a struggle. He knows this is bad, but he doesn't know what to do.

The angel says, shall I take him off? And he shuts his eyes and says, why don't you take him away without my permission? And the angel says, no, I will not do it till you permit me. And he's struggling, struggling, struggling with this. He's been struggling with it for years, keeping this pet.

And then finally he says, okay, tear it off. And the angel pulls it and there's a shredding of his flesh and his pain. And the angel takes that ugly lizard and casts it on the ground and in a moment it's transformed into a beautiful horse.

And then he tells him, now you don't have to walk anymore. You can ride on this horse and you can move towards the kingdom much faster. And then he thinks, how many years I have wasted keeping this wretched little thing.

When I could have made so much progress, if only I knew what I would have got in exchange. You don't realize that that wretched thing which you're clinging on to, if you could only give it up or let God take it away from you. What would replace it in your life? Where you could have been today if you had dealt radically with sin in your life? If you had asked the Holy Spirit to deal radically with sin in your life, any sin

that you identify, that wretched lizard that you are protecting.

Why is it we are afraid of holiness? Because the devil has told us that it's like some difficult task to be done. It's not like and we also need to see, that sin is exactly like sickness. It's like getting leprosy.

You got one more sin, that's like getting cancer. You got another sin in you life, you got tuberculosis as well and you got some other sin, you got AIDS now who wants all this. If you saw that your son or daughter had these sicknesses and you took that child to a doctor.

Would you want that child to be totally free from all those sicknesses? Or would you want him, would you tell the doctor, well let him have one or two to keep him humble? You know sometimes we think, well that sin is just to keep me humble. Why don't you pray like this, Lord give me a little leprosy so it will keep me humble. It's much better to have leprosy than sin, I'll tell you that.

One day when you get into the presence of the Lord you'll discover that. It's better to discover it now. Sin is like sickness, holiness is like hell.

And God wants us to be healthy just like any father wants all his children to be healthy. We don't even want them to have a cold. We don't want them to have a headache.

How many of you want your children to have a headache? Now a headache is not a serious thing, it's not going to kill them. But how many of you want your children to have it? We say, oh that's a small thing. But it's a sin.

And your conscience tells you it's a sin. In the olden days before all these gadgets came out in the medical field with which to detect sickness, in the olden days when a doctor used to go to a house, say a hundred years ago, the first thing that, when someone was sick, they came to the patient, you know what they'd ask them to do? Show me your tongue. That's how they detect whether a person is sick.

Now, I want to ask you the same thing this evening. Show me your tongue. It's a biblical requirement.

I want to turn you to James chapter 1, verse 26. James 1 in verse 26, it says, If anyone thinks these religions are spiritual or holy, they are deceiving themselves. And he cannot bridle his tongue.

Now listen to this. If you think you're a spiritual person, you're a holy person, and you cannot control your tongue, here's what the Bible, the Holy Spirit's giving you a description of yourself. You're deceiving your own heart, and your Christianity is worth zero.

How many of you believe that if you cannot control your tongue, all your Christianity is worth zero? No matter how many meetings you go to, no matter how much you read the Bible in the mornings, no matter how holy you dress, no matter how zealous you are in religious works, no matter how much you wave your hands and sing and clap and shout and even speak in other tongues, if you cannot control your tongue when you speak in your mother tongue, your Christianity is worth zero. I would encourage you, if you're serious about holiness, to begin with your tongue. If you don't begin there, if you're not serious about that, all your life your Christianity will be worth zero.

You can look down on that woman who wears a mini skirt, or who paints up her face like a film star. You can look down on that brother who's got a long hair and say, well I thank God I'm not like him. But if you cannot control your tongue, I want to tell you in the name of Jesus, your Christianity is no better than his.

Many times I've said in my own church, our sisters are dressed modestly, they cover their heads and they sit there. We don't have lipstick and all that stuff in our church. I've said to them, I would rather have in this church a sister who wears jeans, who doesn't cover her head and who wears lipstick and paints her nails, but who can control her tongue and doesn't gossip and doesn't speak evil of others, than a sister who sits here, pious, covered her head, looks holy and goes home and gossips.

Any day, I would prefer the other one. One's a Pharisee. Okay, this one's got a few things wrong on the outside, but she's understood how to control her tongue.

She's at least got, she may not have got a hundred, but at least she's got ten out of a hundred. This one's got zero, despite all her external holiness. I want to say to all of you, and you have to live before God here.

Do you know who was the first person about whom God said, now I know that you fear me. The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That means it's the ABC.

It's just like when children start school, they learn ABC, how to read first. The first steps of holiness is the fear of the Lord. 2nd Corinthians 7.1 says, if you want a perfect holiness, it says there, if you want a perfect holiness, it says in 2nd Corinthians 7.1, you can only perfect it in the fear of God.

You can never do it any other way. That's the way to perfect health. That's the way to hygiene.

The fear of God is not an Old Testament concept. It's in 2nd Corinthians 7.1. It tells us the perfect holiness only if you have the fear of God. Okay, who was the first person about whom God said, now I know that you fear me.

That was Abraham. You know when God said that to him? In Genesis chapter 22, we read one day in the middle of the night, God spoke to Abraham and he tested him. Abraham had already been tested 50 years earlier, asked to leave his Ur of the Chaldees and come out.

Many of you, one day some years ago, God called you to come out of some system you were in to be born again, to accept the Lord and you had the boldness like Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and all that community he was with. You had the boldness to come out of that community, to give up your property, to give up your rights to everything, to be rejected and come out to follow the Lord and you think that everything is over. No, Abraham was tested even after that.

And it says he was tested one day in the night God spoke to him and said, you got to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice to me. Nobody heard it. Nobody heard what God told Abraham except him.

Just like nobody hears right now what God is saying to you in your heart, your wife who is sitting next to you cannot hear what God is saying to you. That's how Abraham heard it. Exactly like you are hearing it right now or what you heard this evening.

Something specific. And now it says God tested Abraham to see what he was going to do about it. He did not say, do that tomorrow morning.

He just said, take Isaac and offer him in the land of Moriah to be his sacrifice. And you see the promptness of Abraham's obedience. That's what proves he was a wholehearted man.

He rose early in the morning, Genesis 22.3, saddled his donkey and took Isaac and his son and went off to do what God told him. Now if he hadn't done that, nobody would have known the next morning that

Abraham was disobeying God. Why? Because nobody had heard what God told Abraham.

And what God told you this evening or yesterday evening, you can disobey and nobody will know. But God knows. God knows what he told you and God knows whether you are obeying or not.

And Abraham obeyed. And then he went up alone in the mountain. He told his servants to stay at the foot of the mountain and he went up alone with Isaac and said, alone with God, he said, Lord, however much this costs me, here is my son, the most precious thing in my life.

I give it to you because I want to obey you. I want to do what you say. I don't want to glory in the fact that 50 years ago I sacrificed something, gave up my community and came out.

A lot of people glory in that. But God is testing you today. And here I am Lord, I give this to you.

And as soon as he was going to kill his son with that knife, God stopped his hand in mid-air and said, wait, don't kill him. Verse 12. Now I know that you fear God.

When is God going to say that about you and me? I will tell you when. Not when we wear holy clothes. Not when we get honor for the way we brought up our children right.

But when we have responded to that thing which God has spoken in our hearts, which others may not understand. Sarah, I am sure, didn't understand. If Abraham had consulted Sarah, he'd never have gone.

She would have kept Isaac back. Paul said, when God revealed his son to me, I did not consult with flesh and blood. Why do I need to consult with flesh and blood when God told me something? Why do you need to consult with flesh and blood when God told you something? From his word especially.

God said, now I know that you fear me. The question is whether God can say that to you and me. Now I know that you fear me.

Because I told you something in secret. I spoke to you something from the word of God which you were reading. I spoke to you something in the meeting.

You heard me. Nobody else heard me except you. And I saw how promptly, the very first opportunity, you went ahead and did it.

Maybe it's some money that you got to return to someone. Which you have taken wrongfully long, long ago. I don't know how many years ago Zacchaeus cheated those people.

Maybe 20 years earlier. But he said he would repay it. He was going to make restitution.

And there were a lot of people who had been cheated in past years. He didn't know where they were. He didn't know their address.

But he said, I can't keep that money. So he decided to give that to the poor. He said, half my goods I give to the poor.

Because a lot of this money I got from people. I don't know where they live today. So I can't make restitution to them.

But I can't keep it. Let me give it to God. And he did it immediately.

It may have taken time for him to complete it. May have taken him two years to complete his restitution. But he started immediately.

And Jesus said, salvation has come here. To this house. Has salvation come to your house? To your life? Have you decided to set everything right? Are there people you have wounded in the past? Whom you have gone and confessed to? There was a sister in our church who got offended with something and left.

And went around scandalizing me and the church and my wife and children and all over the city. And someone was asking me, supposing she wants to come back to the church. One day she feels sorry.

I said, sure. Everyone can come back to the church. But like Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus stole from people money. She has stolen the reputation of many people in this church and of this church itself. She's got to restore it.

How does she restore that? She's got to do what Zacchaeus did. Zacchaeus had to go to this man's house, knock and say, here's the money I stole. And go to the other man's house and knock and say, here's the money I stole.

Wherever possible. That sister would have to go to all those forty, fifty homes that she went to where she had gossiped and scandalized. And each of those homes make restitution and say, I'm sorry for the way I came and gossiped here and spoke evil about so and so in the church.

I take those words back. Then go to the next home. And then go to the next home.

And then come to the church and get up and confess. But she did wrong. She'd be welcomed back with wide open arms.

And God will say to her, now I know that you fear me. You'll never get anywhere, my brothers and sisters, if you don't take sin seriously. You do that.

If the doctor said the only way to get rid of cancer is go to these fifty homes and ask forgiveness, you do it any day. Because we fear cancer more than we fear sin. We fear death more than we fear God.

I've heard of people, you tell them that smoking is a dishonor to God's name. You're dishonoring God's name. They won't give it up.

Then one day the doctor shows them an x-ray and say you've got about four months to live if you smoke another cigarette. And they give it up immediately. How does that happen? The fear of death accomplished what the fear of God could never do.

Are you like that? Can the fear of death accomplish in you what the fear of God can never do? Then what type of Christian are you? Brother, sister, I'm not trying to scare you, but I believe sin is a deadly thing. Many people don't realize the seriousness when they are babes. Do you think a little child knows the seriousness of AIDS? Do you think the little child knows the seriousness of leprosy? They'll go and play around with people who got AIDS and leprosy and tuberculosis.

Well, you wouldn't let them. Because you know the seriousness of it. Most people sitting in Christian churches are like babes.

They don't understand the seriousness of sin. The devils blinded their eyes. The devils fooled them with a holiness which consists of dress and language and coming to meetings, reading the Bible, all types of external things.

But if a man cannot control his tongue, his Christianity is worth zero. If he cannot overcome his temper, if he cannot at least stop gossiping, backbiting, and if he is serious about giving up sin, he can never have fellowship with God without restitution. You ask me this question.

Supposing I have stolen 50 or 500 dollars from say 10 people here and I want to have fellowship with God. Do you think I can fellowship with God without even making an effort to return those 500 dollars to each of those 10 people? You tell me. If you know your Bible, you'll say you'll have to make an effort at least to give back that money to those 10 people.

Okay, let me ask you another thing. If I have stolen the reputation of 10 people here by destroying it behind their back and I want to fellowship with God, can I fellowship with God without restoring that? Do you think a man's reputation is only worth 500 dollars? How many of you believe that? We destroy people. Sometimes we hear stories.

We don't verify them. And we destroy their character. And then we come.

We can be holy with all these external trappings of holiness and I tell you, God's not fooled. I want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, turn to God with a whole heart. Repent and say, Lord, I want to be like Abraham.

I want to set things right today. I want to begin today. I don't care how long it takes.

And I want you to fill me with the Holy Spirit. And the Bible says one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control. If a man is filled with the Holy Spirit, he'll be filled with the spirit of self-control.

He can control his eyes. He can control his tongue. If we haven't got that, I don't know what spirit you've got.

We need to ask God to fill us with the Holy Spirit. H-O-L-Y. Holy Spirit.

That's the thing that's lacking. And when the devil saw some years ago, in the last 30, 40 years particularly, that many people were interested in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he produced this cheap counterfeit which tickles people and gives them some experience to say, you got it. And they haven't got anything.

They got a cheap counterfeit and they go around thinking they've joined the club because they babble some sounds in some meeting. They didn't get the Holy Spirit because it hasn't changed their lives one bit. I know what happened in my life when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

It changed my life. I began to be sensitive to sin. It's not that I never fell, but I became very sensitive.

You know the difference between a pig that falls into dirty water and a cat that falls into dirty water? It's not that they won't fall. Both may fall, but there's a different reaction when they fall. The pig just enjoys it or the cat just ignores it.

Oh, what's there? He's used to it. My father did it. My grandfather did it.

It's true. But the cat, it may fall, but it jumps out immediately and wants to be clean. So a Christian is not one who never falls, but boy, as soon as he falls, he feels sensitive.

If you can go somewhere and you begin to talk about someone, immediately you feel a check. You're filled with the Holy Spirit. You know, I heard of a brother.

There was a man who came to India many years ago, a godly missionary called John Hyde. He was called Praying Hyde. He used to pray most of the time.

This is 70 years ago. And he, once he was in prayer, he was criticizing a particular pastor to the Lord. Lord, I'm you know that this man is like this.

And he said he suddenly felt as if somebody was choking him. It was the Holy Spirit. He couldn't even speak evil about somebody to the Lord.

He had advanced so much in the Christian life. Where are we? We don't have the fear of the Lord, brothers and sisters. We really need to humble ourselves and get rid of all these feelings that we've advanced beyond all these other people in the other communities.

We can sit every day saying, thank God I come out of that and come out of that and I don't belong to old order or new order or X, Y or Z. But I haven't come into the new covenant. What's the use? But if you seek God, and I don't believe that Jesus, whenever he spoke, he always said, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Why did he say that? Because he knew that even he who was the greatest preacher that ever walked on the earth, everybody would not respond to him.

But I pray that we shall all respond because we're called to help, to perfect help. He was ears to hear, let him hear. Let's pray.

You heard what the Holy Spirit spoke to you personally from among all the words that you heard this evening. Perhaps some of those words were specifically spoken to your heart. Maybe there's something you need to set right.

Abraham had to take a three day journey to Mount Moriah. It wasn't around the corner. It was a long journey.

And perhaps you have to take a long journey too. But it's when you get there, you can't escape it. The Lord says, this is what you have to do.

This is where you have to go, like he told Abraham. And this is what you have to do. And when you do that, the Lord himself will say to you, now I know that you fear me.

Let's ask God to give us the strength and power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to get rid of all spiritual sickness and seek out the perfect spiritual help in every area of our lives. In what we read, in what we think, in what we speak. And even if it's a brother who wants to come and pollute us with gossip, let's ask the Holy Spirit for boldness to say, I don't want to hear it.

May God help us. Heavenly Father, we pray you'll apply the truths we've heard tonight personally to each of our hearts. Specifically to those areas where you see cancer spreading, leprosy spreading, AIDS spreading in our soul and the God of this world is blood.

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