

(The Church and Satans Wiles) 2 - as Jesus Is So Are We

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of a deep, personal revelation of Christ as the foundation for the true Church and the source of joy in the Christian life.

Duration: 1:14:54

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:18, John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Timothy 6:17, 1 John 4:1, 1 John 4:17

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of knowing and understanding the Bible. He believes that many Christians are unaware of the truth of Scripture and are easily deceived by the lies of the devil. The preacher encourages his audience to live a life of victory and joy, citing 1 John 4:17 which states that as Jesus is, so are we in this world. He challenges the notion that the Christian life is boring and asserts that his own Christian life is exciting and fulfilling. The preacher also highlights the need to persevere and overcome challenges, comparing it to passing grades in education and the pursuit of higher goals.

Transcript

Yesterday evening we were looking at Jesus' words in Matthew 16 and verse 18 where he told Peter that he would build his church on the rock that he had just confessed. That was a revelation that he got from the Father as to who Jesus was. And wherever we see a failure to build the true Church of Jesus Christ and most of what we see in Christendom today is not an expression of the body of Christ.

A lot of it is just a one-man show and in many other places it's just a nice building or interesting music or something like that, but not the body of Christ. The reason is that those who have sought to build that church have not had a revelation from God as to the person of Jesus Christ. We may know Jesus is our Savior, but that's good for personal salvation.

But the Holy Spirit has come to show us more and more of Christ. And when the same question that he asked the disciples, who do people say that I am? People have so many opinions, but who do you say that I am? And Peter said, you're the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And he said to Peter, you didn't get that by study or intelligence, it's my Father revealed me to you.

And I will confess that throughout my Christian life, my goal has been to get an increasing revelation as to who Jesus is. Like Paul said, that I may know him because it says eternal life is to know God and to know Jesus Christ. And I find that many Christians are not pursuing an increasing knowledge of Christ.

I don't know how many of you are pursuing an increasing knowledge of Jesus. And if you find a shallowness and a dissatisfaction in your Christian life, I'll tell you the answer is here. There may be many other things you are pursuing, but the answer lies in knowing Jesus better.

Knowing him as to who he is, knowing him as the Holy Spirit reveals him as the answer to every need that I can face in life. There's absolutely no situation that you and I can ever face in our whole life. It doesn't matter what it is, whether it's freedom from sin, healing from sickness, power to serve him, power to overcome trials, financial difficulties, anything, you name it.

The answer is in knowing Christ better. And only the Holy Spirit can show us Jesus. And when we see that as the rock, see so many Christians have different ideas as to what that rock is.

The Roman Catholic Church says it's Peter who's the rock. That's a pretty shaky foundation because a few verses later, Jesus called Peter Satan. So that's not a good rock to be on.

He's pretty unstable. The rock is this, a revelation of Christ that comes to us from God through the Holy Spirit. On this rock, the church is built.

And that church, the mark of that church is that the powers of hell can never shake it. It'll attack it, but it won't shake it. And the church will grow from strength to strength spiritually.

It's not just a question of increasing numbers. Now I was mentioning yesterday that the poison that the devil put into Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden can be described, and there are many ways to look at it, but basically it is the poison of seeking one's own. And as long as I don't get rid of this poison of seeking my own, I'm going to have a little bit of the devil's poison in me.

No matter how religious I'm on the outside, it'll make me proud, it'll make me selfish, even though externally I look like a very holy Christian. Even though externally I have a good testimony before others, the poison of the devil still corrupts me. And this is why so many Christians are depressed and gloomy and defeated in every single denomination under the sun.

All their better, so-called better doctrines, don't seem to make them better people. Inside, many, many Christians would be ashamed to let other believers know what's going on in their minds and what their private life is like, what their private home life is like, and the politics and the struggles that go on in their so-called New Testament church. They would be ashamed.

They try to cover it all up. That's not the solution. The solution is to deal with the root of the problem inside.

I mean, if you've got leprosy, what's the use wearing long-sleeve shirts and covering it up? That doesn't heal the disease. If you've got cancer, wearing good clothes doesn't heal the cancer. So it's very important, if you want to follow Jesus, that you decide in your life that I'm not interested in what human beings think about me.

I'm not interested in what my fellow believers think about how spiritual I am. I'll tell you this, if you make that one single decision, it'll revolutionize your life. It's one of the decisions I made many, many years ago,

that I would not bother about what other believers thought about me.

I wouldn't bother what other people thought about my preaching. Whether they praised it or criticized it would be just the same to me. And if you take that decision, I tell you, you'll make more progress in six months than you've made probably in your whole life.

You don't know how much the opinions of men are like chains that hinder us from running the race. So keep that in mind. The devil is always trying to make us think about what will other people say? Well, I couldn't care less what they say.

What does God say? You know, many parents, for example, are concerned about how their children dress and behave. And very often it is for the parents themselves to get a good name in the church. They can tell their children, you must dress like this or behave like this.

What will people say? Why tell my children I couldn't care less what people will say? What will God say? That's the only thing that should concern you, my boys and girls. That's what we should tell our children. It'll help them to become spiritual.

The Bible speaks about the pleasures of sin. It doesn't deny the fact that sin has pleasure. And we should not pretend that sin doesn't have pleasure.

You know, if we don't face reality, we can live in a world of self-deception. I don't pretend that sin doesn't have pleasure. Sin gives a lot of pleasure because the Bible says so.

It says in Hebrews 11 and verse 25 that Moses chose to endure ill-treatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures, the passing pleasures of sin. Look at that expression, to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. There is enjoyment in sin.

Let's face it, people wouldn't be pursuing it so much if there was no enjoyment in it. Men don't pursue, men and women don't pursue things that produce suffering and pain. Why is there so much pursuit of sin in the world? Because there's pleasure in it.

There's enjoyment in it. Whether it's the pursuit of sex or the pursuit of money or the pursuit of eating good food or living in comfortable surroundings, whatever it is, men pursue it because there's a pleasure in it, there's enjoyment in it. And even if it violates God's commandments, they do it because there's pleasure in it and there's enjoyment.

And it says here about Moses that he made a deliberate choice that made him the man of God he became when he decided, I would rather suffer than have pleasure. He rejected pleasure and chose suffering. Whenever a man follows that path and says, yes, I face up to the fact there is an enjoyment down that path, there is pleasure down that path, but I reject it and choose what is foolish in the eyes of a natural man, choose the way of suffering and ridicule, he's on his way to become a man or woman of God.

But what the devil doesn't allow us to see is there is enjoyment and pleasure with God as well. That's one of the things I was saying yesterday, that the devil has somehow convinced people that there's a lot of enjoyment and pleasure in sin, but with the Christian life it's all boring and you know, sickening. But let me show you a couple of verses.

It says in 1 Timothy in chapter 6, 1 Timothy 6, it says in verse 17, it's telling rich people here not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but to fix our hope, 1 Timothy 6 17, on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Does God give us things to enjoy? That's quite a different concept from the idea that many people have about God. The only thing that God gives us things to suffer and suffer and suffer, and the devil keeps on painting that picture before us of God till we think that, oh if I go around suffering, suffering, I'm being very spiritual.

Do you know something about the enjoyment of being a Christian? The Bible says God gives us richly. He doesn't give us spoonfuls. He pours the rain upon us, gives us richly all things to enjoy.

Anything that there isn't, there's an enjoyment in God which is totally free from sin, which is totally pure, and that's what the devil doesn't want us to know. Now let me show you another verse in Psalm 16, where it speaks both about joy and pleasure. You know those are the two things we saw in Hebrews 11 25.

There's a joy in sin, there's a pleasure in sin, which the world is pursuing, and because Christians have not seen or do not proclaim by their words and by their life that there is a joy and a pleasure in God, that they're not portraying the Christian life accurately. And so the devil succeeds with his advertisements of joy and pleasure and sin. In Psalm 16 it says, you find both those words there, joy and pleasure, O God thou wilt make known to me the path of life, Psalm 16 verse 11, in thy presence is fullness of joy.

I thank God for the time in my life, it took many years after I was born again, nearly 15-20 years before I discovered this wonderful truth, that there is fullness of joy in the presence of God. If you get there, you'll have a joy that surpasses the greatest joy you can have on earth. All of us will acknowledge there is pleasure in eating tasty food, chocolates, ice cream, anything tasty, there's a pleasure and the joy in it.

And if you're one who loves good food, let me tell you, there's a million times greater pleasure and joy in the presence of God. It says here, in thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore. It's not that temporary pleasure you get for a moment from eating tasty food, it's permanent and eternal.

There is joy and pleasure, there is joy and pleasure in legitimate sexual relationship and sexual intimacy, there's no doubt about it. But it's nothing, it's absolutely nothing compared to the joy of being in God's presence. And if you have not known the joy of being in thy presence, there is fullness of joy which far exceeds any pleasure you've had in marital sex, I want to tell you, you haven't known the presence of God yet.

There's something you're missing in the Christian life. You need to ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit and bring you right into God's presence to taste something of that pure pleasure and joy. At thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

Whether it's, I don't know what you find interesting, is it music? Do you find pleasure and joy in music? The presence of God is a million times better. Whatever it is, think of the thing that gives you, think of the times in your life when you've had maximum pleasure in something. I'm not talking about sinful things, I'm even talking about legitimate things, legitimate eating, legitimate sex, legitimate good Christian music, or travel, or friendship, or anything, you name it.

It's far exceeded by the joy and pleasure you have in God's presence. And the devil does not want us to experience it. And it's when we don't experience it that we have a tremendous problem with temptation.

We were talking yesterday about the wiles of the devil. The devil is crafty. And Paul says to the Corinthians, he says, I'm afraid that you would be, your minds would be turned away from the simplicity of devotion to Christ in the same way that Eve was turned away by the craftiness of Satan.

So, you know, the devil turned Eve away by showing her a pleasure in something God had forbidden. That's essentially how the devil turned her away. And there's no doubt that God has created a lot of pleasure in the world, which he has also forbidden.

There are many things that are very beautiful that we're not supposed to look at. There are many things that are, that give us a lot of pleasure, which we're not supposed to touch. That's the way God tests us.

That's the way he tested Eve. Like I've often said, when God, when Eve stood before that forbidden tree, it was a test. God was asking her, which do you want more, the pleasure of my presence, the pleasure of obeying me, or the pleasure you can get from this thing I have created? And do you know that every temptation is basically that.

What do you want, God says. Do you want the pleasure you can get from having a lot of money? Do you want the pleasure you can get from looking at things you shouldn't be looking at? Yeah, there's no doubt there's pleasure in it. There was certainly a lot of pleasure in eating from that tree.

And if you went to Eve and asked her after she had eaten from that fruit of that tree, did you enjoy that? Was it tasty? If she was honest, she would have said, oh yes, boy, that was really wonderful. And you have to admit that when you sin in some area, there is a certain pleasure in it. You've got to be honest.

When the test that came to you at that time before you sinned was God asking you, which pleasure do you want more? That which comes from being in my presence or that which comes from what I've created. The right hand, there are pleasures for evermore. And I believe that our responsibility as Christians is to demonstrate to this world that there's a far greater pleasure in knowing God and in living continually in His presence, whatever that costs, whatever I have to deny in order to be in God's presence.

That should be our testimony. And people who look at our lives should be able to see that we have such tremendous joy, even though we don't indulge in all those things that they have, even though we don't have all that money that they have, even though we don't commit all those sins that they have, even though we don't watch the movies they watch. We have got far greater joy in our life.

We're not depressed like them. We're not gloomy like them. But there are very few Christians who have that testimony.

And I believe that's the thing challenge we should take. What do people who know me intimately and well see about me? Do they see the Christian life as something that produces a joy and a pleasure far exceeding anything that the world can offer? You see, it's because we don't have that enjoyment that we go after these other things. This mic is something like some Christians.

You fix them and they drop down again pretty quickly. You need constant fixing. Okay.

You know, when the prodigal son came back and ate the father's, the fatted calf and the food in the father's house, do you think he ever had a longing to go back and eat what the pigs were eating after that? Not at all. But if he had been starving in his father's house, if his father had not given him proper food, then he may have longed once in a while to go and eat what the pigs were eating. Now apply that to your life.

Maybe you've come back to the father's house and you're born again. You're part of God's church. You find yourself longing sometimes to, for the leeks and the onions and the garlic of Egypt, for the pigs that you used to eat once in a while.

You find you like to go back to some of those things which you once gave up. Why is that? It must be because you're starving in the father's house. That must be the reason.

In other words, you're not enjoying the pleasure and joy of the father's presence. So I want to encourage you to seek to be a testimony to the Lord concerning this matter, that the Christian life is one full of joy. I want to show you a verse in Hebrews chapter 12.

It says about fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. And in what way are we to run this race? It says that Jesus set his eyes on a joy that was set before him. Jesus was also looking for joy, just like all the sinful people in the world are looking for joy.

But they look in the wrong places. And Christians who sin occasionally just to get a little pleasure, who want that pig's food just once in a while, it's because they haven't seen the joy that Jesus sought. You know, I'll tell you something.

God created you to have enjoyment. God created you to have pleasure. But the pleasure he wants and joy he wants you and me to have is of the highest sort.

He wants you to have, it's like a father who does not want his child ever to eat pig's food. He wants him to have the best food. Don't think that God is a boring God who is a spoil sport, who wants to make your life miserable.

That's the idea people have. A lot of people have that in the back of their mind. That if you're seeking God's will concerning an easy path and a difficult path, God's will must be the difficult path, right? That's what the devil says.

If you have a choice between a pretty girl and an ugly girl, God's will must be the ugly girl. There's no doubt about it. And if God's will is, you know, for you to have a job with a lower salary or a higher salary, God's will is definitely the one with the lower salary.

Who's been telling you all these lies for so many years? You believe that God's a loving father? I tell you, the greatest revelation that Christians need in our time is that God is a loving father. He's not a spoil sport. He's not one who's out to make your life miserable.

He wants you to have the highest form of enjoyment and pleasure. And I thank God I discovered that. I had to discover it on my own because I never heard anybody preaching that in my younger days.

Jesus sought for joy. Here it says here, who for the joy set before him, and the joy set before him, he endured the cross. Why is a mother, a woman, a wife willing to go through all the trouble and pain of carrying a baby in her womb for so long and the pain of delivering it? Why? Because of the joy set before her of having a baby at the end of it.

And after having one baby, we think that woman said, oh, that's enough. I don't want that anymore. Why do they want to have another one? Because of the joy of having another child and a third one and a fourth one.

Why is that? Even though they know it's going to cause so much pain, they want another one. Jesus for the joy set before him endured the cross. He said, if that's the way to get there, I'll get there.

Look at these students who study so hard to get a good job somewhere. Or people who work so hard to learn a trade in order to earn a living. They know that if they can go through that period of difficulty and trial, they're going to come through to a more comfortable life.

I mean, all of us sitting here have faced that in some way or the other. Who for the joy set before him endured the cross. And what was the joy that Jesus sought? He was tempted in all points as we are.

He could never say to us, follow me. If there was one temptation that you face that he didn't face, then he couldn't say follow me because I could say to him, you don't understand the pressure I'm facing, Lord, in this particular temptation. Do you know that there's not a single trial or temptation that you can ever face in your life, that you can ever face or have ever faced in your life where you could turn to the Lord and say, Lord, you don't understand what I'm going through.

He understands it very well. And the devil doesn't want you to know that he understands it very well. The Bible says we don't have a high priest who cannot sympathize with us.

We have a high priest who can sympathize with us 100% because he's gone through it. Do you believe Jesus ever had a headache in his life? Well, I'll tell you, when I was pursuing this path of seeking a life of overcoming and I saw that the secret of godliness was in the fact that Jesus had come as a man like me and was tempted like me. And I remember years ago when I was lying in bed with a severe headache.

And I said, Lord, did you ever have a headache when you were on earth? Do you understand what it is, what I'm going through right now? And why are you allowing this? It's very interesting. The word I got from the Lord at that time, I believe he did have headaches when he was on earth. Otherwise, he couldn't be, he couldn't understand what I'm going through.

My children were small at that time. And you know how all normal children irritate their parents. That, by the way, is not abnormal.

Unless your child is mentally challenged and in a vegetative state and just lies in bed the whole day. I don't want any children like that. But otherwise, children irritate.

And I remember when I was in bed, the Lord told me, well, I'm working on your character. I have taught you to overcome being irritated by your children without a headache. Now, I'm trying to teach you to overcome being irritated with a headache.

That's a higher class, I'll tell you that. It's a much higher class than overcoming irritation when you don't have a headache. So I saw there was a purpose in everything.

And he was tempted like me too. And he overcame. And I decided I'm gonna pass.

You know, when you go from second grade and you pass second grade and you go to third grade, don't you want to pass third grade too? Because when you pass third grade, you go to fourth grade. And the examinations are tougher in the fourth grade. But why is it we pursue that education? Why do you keep allowing your children to go to high grade? Why not remove them with all the difficult examinations they have in first grade? Say, stop, that's too enough for you.

It's because we know that they'll become better people. So it's like that in the Christian life, who for the joy set before him endured the cross. And you know, whether you know it or not, you have applied that principle in many areas in your life, in your profession, in your education, in the way you're seeking to earn a living.

You have applied that principle where you've allowed, you've denied yourself certain things in order to get a degree or to accomplish something or learn a trade or a profession or something. You have applied that principle. And I'm just asking you to apply the same principle in the spiritual life.

Jesus realized that there was a joy, the joy of being in the Father's presence continuously. And to be in the Father's presence continuously, there was a certain route to that. And that was to deny the temptations of the flesh.

That is the same choice that Eve had. Yeah, there's a tremendous attractiveness about this. There's a pleasure in eating of this tree.

But Jesus said, I choose my father. Adam and Eve said, I choose this earthly pleasure. There are only two choices, the way Adam and Eve went and the way Jesus went.

Now I want to tell you, every single one of you, you and me, all through our life, we have made decisions, many, many decisions. In one day, we make so many decisions. And every one of those decisions is one of these two.

I choose the way Adam went, or I choose the way Jesus went. And imagine in one day, if I made 25 decisions to please myself, to seek my own, not to commit murder and adultery. I'm not talking about these horrible things.

No, I'm talking about the decent type of sins that we commit, which don't look so ugly in the eyes of others, where we can still maintain our reputation in the church, where we can still consider ourselves pretty holy people. But we've made little, little decisions of selfishness based on seeking my own, not followed the word of God, which says, whatever you do, do for the glory of God. Even if you eat or drink, do for the glory of God.

Don't eat as much as you want to eat as much as you should. A simple rule, because you can be healthier. I remember, you know, as we get older, we had to be more careful about what we eat.

I think young people should also be careful what they eat, but particularly as we grow older. And what the Lord told me was, I remember reading a little book years ago, something that I've never forgotten, that if your life is shortened, because, you know, in your 30s you died as a martyr, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ somewhere, and you stand before the Lord with a life that was shortened on earth, because you were a martyr for Christ, you'll have great joy, you'll have no regrets. But if your life is shortened because you ate a lot of fast food and junk food and all that other rubbish that's being offered nowadays, and you stand before the Lord and say, Lord, I died too soon because I couldn't control my appetite, you're gonna have a lot of regrets when you stand before the Lord.

And I never forgot that. I said, Lord, I want to live. I don't like this rotten old earth, but there's a lot of work to do for the Lord, and that's the only reason to live.

I want to live the full length of my days, to accomplish your will, to serve. There are not many people serving the Lord in the world today. The percentage of people faithful to Christ is very, very small, and you and I are needed.

I'll tell you, you're needed. And if that requires denying ourselves certain types of food, are you willing to do that, to keep yourselves fit, to serve the Lord, to keep yourself from sickness that comes from the wrong type of eating or any wrong type of habits, because you want to be available, not because we love this world, none of us love this world, but because the need is so great for the Lord's work. There are many things that we may have to deny, for the joy set before us, the joy of being a blessing to hundreds and thousands of people, you want that? The joy of being able to live a life that glorifies God, that accomplished the purpose with which He allowed you to be born out of your mother's womb one day, a plan that He had for your life, and you don't want it to be frustrated.

We need to take these things seriously, and if you're young, if you're gripped by this when you're 15, 20 years old, it's wonderful. I'm so thankful that I was gripped by this when I was 21 years old, that God had a plan for my life. I already had a plan for my life, but I discovered when I was 21 that God had a plan for my life, and He didn't tell me the whole plan, but I was absolutely convinced that His plan must be better than mine, because I couldn't see the future.

I didn't know what would be the best. I didn't know what would be the best in relation to eternity, but my Heavenly Father knew, and I said, Lord, before I come to the end of my life on earth, I don't know how long I'll live. I didn't know at 21 how long I'd live, but I said, before I come to the end of my life, I want to finish that plan.

Now I want you to say that, and if it requires going, taking up the cross in different situations, for the joy set before you, I promise you, I guarantee you, I can give it to you in writing, that if you choose this way, your life will be full of joy. We will expose the lie of the devil. I have decided to expose the lie of the devil, that the Christian life is a boring life.

I say it's not boring for me. My Christian life is supremely happy. It's exciting.

There's a lovely verse in Proverbs 14, verse 14, which is paraphrased in the Living Bible as, the godly man's life is exciting. I like that paraphrase. I found it to be true in my life.

The godly man's life is exciting. Every day, life is not boring. I tell you honestly, 365 days of the year, my life is exciting.

And 366 days this year, it's going to be exciting. Exciting, because it's wonderful. Walking with God is wonderful.

Overcoming Satan, it's wonderful being able to see the snares and traps that Satan has set for me, and making a fool of him, that he didn't succeed in catching me in that trap. It's exciting. God's made our Christian life to be exciting.

And if your Christian life is boring, I want to say to you, you're not in the center of God's will. There's no doubt about it. Yes, there are a lot of Christians whose life is boring, because they've been seeking their own.

They haven't fixed their eyes on Jesus, who decided that he would only live for the glory of his Father, and nothing else. There are a lot of Christians who want to accept Christ and go to heaven, but whose aims and goals are not much different from the aims and goals of a lot of worldly people. It's to make more money, to live a comfortable life, and have a little bit of religion.

Well, I'll tell you, you're going to have a lot of problems in your life, and your Christian life will be unsatisfying, boring. Don't be surprised. But if you fix your eyes on Jesus, and run the way he ran the race, who for the joy that he was going to get, was willing to endure the cross, then your Christian life will be exciting.

And I decided that I want to be a living testimony to the fact that God is a wonderful God. God is a good God all the time, and he he's given us richly all things to enjoy. And he wants our Christian life to be triumphant, full of true pleasure.

He wants us to enjoy our Christian life, not endure and suffer, but enjoy it. Jesus' life was full of joy. I mean, I'm always challenged by the fact that when he knew that he was going to be crucified the next morning at the Last Supper with his disciples, he knew in less than 24 hours he'd be dead on a cross, humiliated, spat upon, shamed, no justice given to him.

And he knew that he'd be hanging there on the cross, killed by evil men. What does he tell his disciples in John 15? He says, I've got so much joy, I want to give it to you. My joy I give unto you.

Imagine a man who's going to be sitting on the electric chair tomorrow morning and going around encouraging people today and saying, fellas, I'm so happy today. I just want to encourage you fellas with the joy I have. And he's going to the electric chair tomorrow.

He's going to be killed. That's true Christianity. It doesn't matter what's going to happen tomorrow.

It may be death. It doesn't make a difference. I'm in the center of God's will.

See, I tell you, most Christians are so happy with the substandard Christian life they are living and which they see most Christians around them are living and they accept that as normal. I want to tell you it's not normal. It's abnormal, subnormal.

If you want to know the normal Christian life, it's the way Jesus lived on earth. That's the normal Christian life. He didn't make a lot of money because he didn't pursue money.

I mean, I'm thinking not of, I mean, he didn't make money as a Christian preacher, which he was for three and a half years. And he didn't make much money as a carpenter. Because I can imagine how he lived his life as a carpenter.

If some poor widow had come and asked him to make a stool or a bench, he'd have just made it and gone and delivered it in the widow. And when she asked, how much does it cost? You say, oh, that's a gift. How rich are you going to be if you're going to be like that? If you're thinking more about doing good than making money, you're not going to be a rich person.

If you're thinking more about being absolutely honest and paying your taxes and absolutely honest in everything in life, you're not going to be very rich. I remember hearing of that, the statement of, there was a great missionary to Africa in the 19th century called David Livingston, an Englishman. He made a

statement concerning his father.

He grew up in a very godly home. And he said, my father was so downright honest that he could never become a rich man. I've never forgotten that.

He was so utterly honest in everything that he could never become a rich man. And Jesus was like that. I mean, if you're pursuing that type of life where you're seeking the glory of God in everything, I'll tell you one thing, you'll never starve.

Your children will never starve. David says, I was young and I'm an old man, but I've never seen a righteous man starving or begging for bread. And I've never even seen his children or grandchildren begging for bread.

God takes care of his children. I tell you that. Those who seek his kingdom and his righteousness first will have all other things added to them.

There's no doubt about it. If there's only one loaf of bread in town, it'll come to my house because I'm seeking God's kingdom first. It's true.

You don't have to worry about retirement benefits. You don't have to worry about not having money to pay medical insurance or anything. You seek God's kingdom first and his righteousness.

I can give you a written guarantee. You'll never lack for anything in your whole life. What is there that almighty God cannot do? But he wants, he wants people who will be a testimony to him, who will expose the lie of the devil.

That you got to seek some things in the world in order to be happy. It's a lie. It's a lie.

And our children must see it. It's very important that our children see that. Through many years of observing Christians in many places, I've come to see that the way our children turn out is a pretty good testimony of what we sought in our life.

That's why I don't have a respect for a preacher whose children are not following in the ways of the Lord. People say, oh, well, what can he do? Well, his children must have seen he was a hypocrite at home. That's why they turned out that way.

There was something his children saw at home, which was not right. They saw that daddy preached something in the pulpit, but he was seeking something else at home. Train up a child in the way he should go when he's old, he will not depart from it.

That's the word of God. He will not depart from it. I often think of Moses.

His mother had him for, I don't know how long. Pharaoh's daughter gave Moses as a baby to his mother and said, look after him. Let's assume that she had him for seven or eight years.

Think if you had a child for just seven or eight years, and after that, you've got to send your child to the most worldly of all places, Pharaoh's palace, where there's sin, money, wealth, everything. And your child, whom you had only for eight years, grows up without any godly influence for the next 30 years. And at the age of 40 says, I belong to God.

I don't want the pleasures of sin. I don't want the riches of Egypt. Boy, you must have done a really good job in those first eight years with your child.

That's why I have a tremendous respect for Moses' mother. His father was a poor slave, working out, probably going to work at six o'clock in the morning and coming back at nine o'clock at night and saw very little of his little boy. But his mother was at home and she did such a first-class job.

Do you think when Moses stands before the Lord to get his reward, his mother is going to get nothing? Oh, you got to be, you got to be crazy. God is a righteous God. If you trained your child, mothers, if you trained your child to grow up godly, to live for him and to be useful to him, you can be pretty sure you're going to get a reward for his ministry too.

I believe that. Don't think that women and mothers have no ministry just because they don't stand in a pulpit. Which pulpit did Moses' mother stand in? Where would you have had a deliverer for Israel if Moses' mother had not been faithful in bringing up that child in a godly way? We're going to get a lot of surprises when we stand before the Lord.

There's no person on earth, no child of God, for whom God doesn't have a ministry. And your primary calling is to expose the lie of the devil, to show that it's worth it to give up everything to follow Jesus, to honor him, to glorify him. And that is how the devil gets no power.

You know, imagine if you have a church, and by church I mean not a building, I mean not a denomination or an organization, but a group of people. It may be 10 people, it may be a hundred people, but they've all determined to live by this rule. Can you imagine what type of church that will be? The gates of hell will never be able to overpower such a church.

That's the type of church God wants us to build. He doesn't want you to live just an individual holy life. My brother, sister, if you're living an individual holy life, praise the Lord.

But I want to say to you that God wants to do more than that with you. The Bible says, Jesus said, a good grain of wheat, if it remains all by itself, it'll be alone. You put that grain of wheat in a glass case and keep it on the window, keep it on it in your cupboard, and you come back after 20 years, it's one grain of wheat.

Well, it looks beautiful inside a glass case. A lot of Christians are like that. But then there are others who say, well, let me fall into the ground and die.

A grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, dies to what? Dies to your own plans, your own ambitions, your own desires, the things you're seeking, the things you want to pursue, all the things where you seek your own, you die to all of that. Take up the cross and follow me means what? I mean, if you were in Jerusalem seeing a man taking up his cross, you knew where he was going. That was a very common sight in Jerusalem those days.

That's how the Romans killed all the worst criminals. And you saw a man carrying the cross and going, you know, that was a criminal who was going to be crucified. He had said goodbye to his family.

He had closed his bank account and he had finished with everything. There was nothing left. He had said goodbye to the world.

It was finished. There was nothing anymore on earth he was seeking. He was going to die.

He had said goodbye to his friends. He says, I'm going off to another world now. That's what Jesus meant when he told disciples, you want to follow me? See that man taking up the cross and going, that's what you got to do.

See, that's become such a, you know, a different type of meaning it has today. It's another type of cross. People don't understand what it means.

You know, they wear these crosses around the neck and they have it here and there. It's become a symbol of beauty. Have you ever seen anyone wearing a golden symbol of an electric chair or a gallows around his neck? Nobody would hang a golden gallows around his neck.

Or, no, because that's a symbol of shame. But that's what the cross was. But today it's another cross that Christians have.

And that's why they don't understand the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus Christ was an instrument of shame, of having finished with everything that the world had to offer. I've said goodbye to it.

There must come a time in your life, if it hasn't come yet, it must come now, where you're finally said goodbye to this rotten old world. Has that come in your life yet? I know very clearly, time came in my life many years ago when I was very young. And I said, Lord, I've had ambitions.

I want to live for this world. I had a lot of ambitions in this world. And a time came when I said, no, I finished with it.

And I don't regret it. I don't regret it at all. Because what I got was far better.

That's the reason why you don't have the type of joy. And can you, how many Christians are there who can honestly say, by the grace of God, I rejoice always, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I'm never in a bad mood because God is on the throne.

My father runs this universe. Jesus Christ is Lord. My sins are all forgiven.

The devil was defeated on the cross 2,000 years ago. Why should I be depressed? How many Christians are there who can honestly testify to that? I'm not boasting, but by God's grace I can. It's true.

Why do I say that? Because so many people say the standards of the Bible are impossible. I want to testify to the fact they are not impossible. You can overcome anger.

When the Bible says, put away anger completely, you can put it away. I want to say it's true. When the Bible says, rejoice in the Lord always, it's possible.

When the Bible says, be anxious for nothing, it's possible. There are a lot of things I don't have the answer to. I don't know why so many sicknesses among Christians are not healed.

I'll tell you frankly, I don't know. A lot of sick people I prayed for are not healed. I don't know why.

I don't know the reason. I sought the Lord, and the Lord says, I'm not going to give you an answer. I leave it at that.

I'm not saying that I have the answer to everything, but I believe that the things that the Bible says, that there's an enjoyment in God, there's a pleasure at his right hand, that's eternal, that's far greater than

anything that the world can give, that I can say is true. Absolutely true, because I've tasted something of it. And my greatest longing, having tasted something of it, is to have more.

They say that a tiger, once he gets a taste of human blood, once, boy, he's after human blood ever after. He says there's nothing like it. He becomes a man-eater after that.

It's something like that, you know, you get a taste of what this pure pleasure that God can give. You really want that more than anything that this world can offer. And I believe many Christians haven't tasted that.

They haven't really tasted the fatted calf that the Father has laid on the table. They've come to the Father's house, but they're sitting around starving, and that's why occasionally they want to sneak out and go back to the pigs. You find that? And even if you actually don't go back, do you envy some of your worldly friends who are enjoying what the pigs are eating? It's amazing how many Christians are.

If they're honest, they'd say there's something. I seem to wish I could do that once in a while. That means they have not been freed.

They have not seen how horrible sin is. They have not seen that sin destroys their personality. You know, that when I say God is a good God, how do we say that I know that my Father loves me? You know, children find it very difficult to believe that whatever their parents say is for their good.

All children around the world, and when they become teenagers, they are convinced that their parents don't know what's good for them. They say, Dad, you're old-fashioned. You don't realize, etc.

And we've had that problem. All of us have that problem with little children. You tell them not to do something.

They think we're trying to deny them something. You try and take away a sharp knife from the hand of a two-year-old. He's absolutely convinced that you don't love him.

Why in the world would you take that sharp knife, which he enjoys so much, so shiny and all that, away from his hand? And that's how it is when the Lord asks us to give up something. We don't understand. It's because we're babies.

We haven't grown up. A grown-up person understands that a knife is dangerous. I mean, a five-year-old doesn't understand why you can't give him \$500 when he asks you for it.

Isn't \$500 a good thing? Of course it is. Why in the world doesn't this loving father give it to me then? Because you don't know how to handle it. There are a lot of good things that God won't give you because you don't know how to handle them.

You got to grow up a little. So there are many things like that, you know. The mark that I know that whatever my father says is good for me is that I'll obey my father a hundred percent.

That's how I prove that I believe that God's a good God. It's one thing to say God is good all the time, and all the time God is good. I can keep singing it for a hundred years.

But the proof of it is that I do everything that God says. And I will search the scriptures to find out what God says. You know, a lot of people have argument with me about whether I use the King James Version.

I say, listen, much more important than the King James Version is to know, do you know what the Bible says? Are you obeying the scriptures? Whatever version you have. Every, I've got a Bible at home which says 26 translations of the New Testament. And I'll tell you something, every one of those translations say that if you don't take up the cross and deny yourself you cannot follow Jesus Christ.

That's uniform in all those translations. The ones who is fighting about a translation, if you're not denying yourself every day, if you're seeking your own, there's no use glorying in the King James Version. I'll tell you that because the King James Version also says you shouldn't seek your own.

So it's much more important to see whether I'm seeking my own instead of fighting about these little trivial little things and missing. This is the tactics of the devil. The devil gets you occupied with some trivial little thing and makes you miss the most important thing in the Christian life, which is to be delivered from seeking our own.

And that's why the church never gets built. That's why there are so many problems in your church. That's why there's so much politics and fighting and quarreling.

Would you believe it when if I tell you that I have worked in a church for 32 years with a co-worker and we have never fought with each other even once. We work together, we don't always agree on everything. We won't and none of us will agree completely till we get to heaven.

But you don't have to be agreed on everything before you're united. Jesus didn't say all men will know you are my disciples when you agree on everything. No.

But he said all men know yourselves when you love one another. That's our calling. There is a Christian life that is way above what we are experiencing right now.

And the Lord is inviting us to come up higher, come up to that life, those who have years to hear. And that's how we will demonstrate to the devil and to the world around us that the devil is a liar. It's one thing to say with our lips Satan's a liar.

It's quite another thing to demonstrate by the choices I make in my life that all that the devil offers me, I don't want it. You know that the devil offered things to Jesus? Why wouldn't he offer them to you? You know that the devil quoted scripture to Jesus? Why won't he quote scripture to you? I mean you got to be really crazy to think that the devil won't quote scripture to you to lead you astray. When he sees that you're interested in something where you're seeking your own, you're seeking your own and in seeking your own you're pursuing after something not something sinful.

I'm not talking about adultery or murder or internet pornography or any of that rubbish. I'm talking about things that look good in the eyes of other Christians. But you know deep down in your heart you're seeking your own there.

The devil will give you a verse from scripture to that. He quoted scripture to Jesus and you say ah the Lord has led me. You're only fooling yourself.

You know deep down in your heart that you're seeking your own. Why not be honest about it? Why not go before God and say Lord I can fool everybody. I can't fool you.

I can't fool the devil. The devil just sits back and has a laugh when I quote scripture to other people and say the Lord has led me to do this and he knows very well that you're seeking your own. This is the reason my brothers and sisters why we're not rising up to the type of Christian life the Bible describes a life of triumph and joy and victory and and walking as Jesus walked on this earth.

Where we are free from fear that Satan would do something to harm us. The gates of hell will never be able to prevail against the church with Jesus bills. Okay Satan can never overcome me in any situation.

Is anybody here afraid of the devil? There's a verse that the Lord gave me some years ago in 1 John 4. When I say give me it came came up to me from scripture. It's for you too if you take it. When I say the Lord gave me a verse I'm not talking about extra scriptural revelation.

I'm not talking about work something that came to me from heaven. I don't believe in any revelation outside God's God's book. I spent my life studying this book because I believe it's the only book that God has written.

If you believe the Bible is God's Word a lot of people who fight for the Bible is God's Word etc. But I see the proof of that is you'll study it. You'll study it more than any other book.

You will read it you'll meditate on it and if you're not doing that don't make a boast that this is God's Word. You can say it with your lips but it does your life doesn't demonstrate it. I mean if I didn't spend my life studying this book it's what's you saying this is God's Word.

I mean if you really believe tell me honestly if you really believed that in the millions of books there are in the world there's only one book written by God don't you think you'd spend your time studying it. I'll tell you this my conviction is the vast majority of Christians who say the Bible is God's Word deep down in their heart they don't believe it. The people who boast about the King James Version don't believe it.

They don't seem to know the scriptures very often when I talk to them from it. Why is it Jesus knew the scriptures when he was 12 years old and he didn't have a printed Bible at home. There were no printed Bibles in those days.

He had to listen when he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He had to listen when he went to school where they would use the scriptures and that's how he heard and heard and heard without a Bible at home. He knew the scriptures at the age of 12.

He didn't come to earth with that knowledge of scripture and assuming that he was around five just like children when they begin to understand things. In seven years he knew the scriptures. You know that gripped me and I decided when I was about 21 years old, Lord in seven years I'm gonna know the scriptures and I decided as a young man I'm gonna get into this book and study it.

I used to carry a little pocket New Testament with me. If I stood at a bus stop I would take out and read it while others were just gaping around looking at everything going on around them. I'd read the Bible.

When I was sitting in a bus traveling while others were just chatting and talking and looking out here and there I would read the Bible. I would read it at every opportunity. If I was in the restroom I'd be reading the Bible.

That's how I got to know it in seven years. I want to tell you if you really believed, if you really deep down in your heart believed that there's only one book that Almighty God has written for man to guide man, you would take every opportunity to study it because you want to know what your Creator has said to you. I find a tremendous ignorance of scripture among Christians.

I say you don't believe it's God's Word. Many Christians today watch television more than they read the Bible. They read a lot of other books.

They read things on the internet more than they read the Bible. They know more about things going on in politics than they know what's written in scripture. Well, you're not going to expose the devil's lie like that.

Would you refuse something that's really going to benefit you? Here's something I'll tell you honestly. That knowledge of scripture that I've acquired in those early years of my life benefited me throughout my Christian life in different situations. When I've come to crossroads in my life, shall I take this or this? It's a word that I studied in scripture that came to me as an answer and guided me.

God's Word. I've heard a word behind me saying this is the way, walk in it. You know it's a wonderful way to live.

That's how Jesus lived. Jesus said man shall not live by bread alone. He shall not live by earning his salary.

That's what we would apply to today's language. How do you get your bread? You get a salary from your office or place of work. That's how you earn your bread.

I want to say you shall not live by earning a salary but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. That's more important than earning your salary. How many of you really believe it? If you did, I believe God would do amazing things through your life.

But the devil, you know how he came to Eve? We're thinking about the devil's schemes and his craftiness in these days. He came to Eve and said what are the first words the devil ever spoke to a human being? Do you remember? Has God really said this? Is this really God's Word? And the devil and Satan and that's where he tripped Eve up. And that's what he says to you today.

Is this really God's Word? You mean you have to take it so seriously? You have to study it so deeply? Oh no. Just have a general idea. That's good enough.

You got preachers to tell you and that's how multitudes of Christians today are deceived by the preachers. You know when I hear a lot of these preachers on television and I've heard all of them because it's part of my responsibility to know what people are preaching. So I decided to listen to all the preachers who preach on Christian television in India for a period and once I heard any of them I disconnected the cable and I said I don't want anymore anymore of that.

I wanted to hear what they were all saying and I'll tell you this. I sit there listening to these people and I say how in the world, how in the world are Christians deceived by this? And I get the answer. They don't read the Bible.

That's why they are deceived by all these television preachers. They don't know their Bibles. They don't know what the Bible says.

We have a generation of people like that who don't know what the scriptures say and that's why we have so many of these people swindling poor people of money and preaching all types of things which are not in Scripture, leaving out the message of repentance, leaving out the message of taking up the cross every day, leaving out the message of building the body of Christ, leaving out the message that leaders must be servants and wash people's feet. All that is left out. How is it that Christians are swallowing all this? They don't know their Bibles.

In the midst of such a generation, my brothers and sisters, you who have taken all the trouble to come here this weekend to hear God's Word, let me tell you in Jesus name the Word of the Lord to you. God wants to use you to be a witness to him in this ungodly generation, to the truth of Scripture, to the truth that the Christian life is a life of victory, is a life in which there's pure pleasure and pure enjoyment and that the devil's a liar and that we can live an overcoming life. How overcoming? Let me show you this verse that the Lord gave me.

1 John chapter 4 verse 17, the last part. As Jesus is, so are we in this world. 1 John 4 verse 17.

I'm sure you've read that many times. All of you who read the New Testament have read that. Think about it for a moment.

Let me tell you something about how I meditated on Scripture. Sometimes when I'm reading Scripture, I come to a verse like that and I'll tell you honestly, I'm stuck on that verse for days. I'm not in any eagerness to finish the Bible in one year.

I'm more interested in seeing how many times the Bible goes through me than how many times I go through the Bible. A lot of people who boast that I've gone through the Bible so many times. It's much better the Bible goes through you once than you go through the Bible a hundred times.

Has this verse gone through you? As Jesus is, so are we in this world. Now I have meditated on that in different situations. You apply that to your own life and I'll tell you how I applied it to my life.

I'm called to the ministry of the Word to preach God's Word. I say, how is it with Jesus? As he was in this world, the devil was scared of him. Do you believe that? You believe the devil was scared of Jesus? Yeah, sure.

Wherever he went, the demons would tremble. You know, there were demons who sat quietly in the synagogues while all the Pharisees preached for 20-30 years. As soon as Jesus came there, they got all worked up.

How did they sit quietly when the Pharisees were preaching from God's Word for so many years? Here was an anointed man. Here was a man who came in the power of the Holy Spirit, not just with a letter of the Word. That's what provoked them.

That's what will provoke the devil anywhere. They get scared. Oh, Jesus is coming.

Jesus is coming. And the Lord said to me, as you were afraid of the devil once in your life, from now on the devil will be afraid of you. And I said, Lord, that's how I want to live.

I want to live all my days with the devil scared of me. There was a time when I was scared of him. There was a time when I was scared as to what he could do to me here and what he could do to me there and

what he could do to me through this person and that person and the other person and what he could do to me when I was sleeping at night or what he could do to me here and there.

It's gone. He is going to be scared of me because as Jesus is, so am I in this world. You say, well, that's not possible.

Okay. According to your faith, be it unto you. According to my faith, it will be unto me.

You know, God's word is there. You can take it and say, Lord, it's for me. Or you can take it and say it's impossible.

One day when God took Abraham outside and said, when he had no children, you're going to have as many children as the stars in the sky. If Abraham had said, oh Lord, tell me another story. You know, he didn't say that.

You know what he said? It says Abraham believed in the Lord. And the word believe in the Hebrew is the word amen. Abraham said, amen.

Amen. Like the Hebrews say amen. And like you Americans say, amen.

It's the same thing. Yes, Lord. It's going to be true.

Amen. It's true. It's going to be like that.

And it was like that. No word in scripture will be fulfilled in your life till you say amen to it. I'll tell you that right now.

You wouldn't even have your sins forgiven today if you hadn't said amen to the fact that Christ died for your sins. There are multitudes today in the world who don't have their sins forgiven. They haven't said amen to it.

As Jesus is, so are you in the world. You can say amen or you say, no, not for me. That's up to you.

God wants you to live a triumphant life. He says, come up higher. Let's pray.

Dear brothers and sisters, even if you're absolutely new to the Christian life, it doesn't make a difference. There's no such thing as seniority in God's church. The people who come at the 11th hour can get the best.

There's no virtue in the fact that you came many years ago. If you believe today and say, Lord, that's for me. That is for me.

I heard something today. That's for me. I want it.

I have only one life to live on earth and I want to fulfill all of your will in it. It can be accomplished in your life. Heavenly Father, we pray that this word will sink down into our hearts and produce fruit in all of our lives.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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