

(The Church and Satans Wiles) 5 - Forgiveness and Rest

by Zac Poonen

We must forgive others from our hearts, not just externally, in order to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect and to avoid being handed over to the demons and tortured.

Duration: 1:01:39

Scripture: Matthew 4:4-5, Luke 6:36, Hebrews 4:9

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Spiritual Rest"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of studying the scriptures and not being lazy in our approach to understanding the word of God. He highlights the connection between the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and its shorter form in Luke, pointing out that both versions end with the story of the wise and foolish builders. The speaker also shares a personal testimony of someone who chose to forgive all those they held grudges against before their death, emphasizing the significance of forgiveness and the knowledge of the Lord over material wealth. The sermon concludes with an invitation from Jesus to come under his authority and find rest for our souls, with the speaker encouraging listeners to pray for their lives and homes to be islands of peace.

Transcript

I have longed to see churches in my own country, that's what I've shared with the churches we've planted, that they should be islands of peace in a world full of unrest. We know that the world is just getting increasingly full of turmoil when unrest is like a troubled sea. The Bible says the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest in Isaiah.

That's a picture of the world. There is no rest, says my God to the wicked. But when God's people are also not at rest but in tension and panic and turmoil, then they have become like the wicked.

It's something which God has said only about the wicked, and that's two verses I want to show you. The first is in Isaiah 57, 20 and 21. The wicked are like the tossing sea.

It cannot be quiet. Its waters toss up refuse and mud. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.

That's a statement God has made. If you're wicked, you have no peace. You will not be at rest.

You'll be always like the troubled sea. And so if we find in our hearts turmoil and unrest, it means there is some wickedness there. Definitely, because that's a condition of wicked people as far as God is concerned.

It's very easy for even a believer to have a little bit of hell in his heart. What do I mean by that? See, hell is a place where there is absolutely no mercy. Nobody is merciful in hell.

And if there is anybody on earth towards whom you cannot be merciful, you've got a little bit of hell in your heart, whether you know it or not. The one area where Jesus said we must be absolutely perfect here on this earth was in the area of mercy. I don't know whether you know that.

There are a million areas where we cannot be perfect, like God. We cannot be perfect in holiness on this earth. We cannot be perfect in love.

We cannot be perfect in wisdom, power. No area can we be like God. And yet Jesus said that we are to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

He said in Matthew 5.48, you must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect. Now when you read a verse like that, many of you have read it, I'm sure. If you've read the Sermon on the Mount, you've probably read it a hundred times.

What have you done with that verse? Have you just ignored it? I think that's what a lot of Christians do. That's what I did for many, many, many years. Ignored it.

Can you imagine that Jesus says something and you ignore it? I never even realized what a sin it was. What a sin it is that Jesus says something and you say, ah, not important. I never realized how serious a sin it was.

I think there are millions of Christians committing that sin every day. They ignore those words of Jesus. So I decided to find out what does it mean.

Because the Lord told me that I must be perfect as my Heavenly Father is perfect. Now I don't care what the rest of Christendom says. I stopped listening to Christendom ages ago.

That was my salvation. I started reading the Bible and I discovered that a lot of things that Christians preach are not in the Bible. And that's why I never listen to a preacher who doesn't show me what he teaches from the Scriptures.

I've taught for many years in my own churches in India for 32 years and I always point them to Scripture. One of the great tragedies I see in American churches is people don't even bring a Bible to the meeting now. They don't know the Bible.

And I noticed this because in my church even the little children bring a Bible. When I quote a verse they're all looking it up. They know the Scriptures.

But here I find in many churches they're not familiar with the Bible. They don't respect it as God's Word. Jesus said in Matthew 5.48, You are to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

So I say, Lord, I don't know what that means but I want to find out. I don't want to just leave it there and ignore it as if you're some unimportant person who made a statement. You're the most important person in

the universe.

And very often when you can't find the answer in one passage, you just find it in another. God has hidden many truths in Scripture because the Bible is not given for lazy people. Jesus told Adam, By the sweat of your brow you will earn your bread.

And the bread of life which is in God's Word we have to perspire and sweat to get it. Lazy people don't get bread on earth. They sit around at home, don't work, they don't have bread to eat.

And those who are lazy when they come to the Scriptures don't get the bread of life from here either. So I would encourage you to take pains to study the Scriptures. So when I compared Scripture with Scripture, I found that the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is repeated in a shorter form in Luke 6. You know, just like Matthew 7 ends with the story of the two builders, the wise and the foolish builder, Luke 6 ends with the same story.

So it's the Sermon on the Mount. But in Luke 6, that same verse is put slightly differently. Then I understand the meaning of, You must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

In Luke 6, the same verse is quoted like this. Verse 36, You must be merciful as your Father is merciful. And when I put Scripture and Scripture together, I learned that from Jesus.

That when the devil came to tempt him, and he heard Jesus reply saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. You know how the devil tempted him with the second temptation? Ah, it is written, that he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. So if the devil sees you're the scriptural type, he'll give you Scripture to lead you astray.

And you know how Jesus replied to that? It is also written. That's the way to answer. So what we learned from that is that the devil can tempt you with Scripture.

And if you don't know what is also written in Scripture, you'll go astray. That's why it's important. Those who don't value the Bible, the devil tempts in other ways.

Those who value the Bible, he leads them astray with Scripture. I can tell you, show you numerous people I've met in life, who've gone completely astray with Scripture. Look at the crowds of Pharisees in the synagogues in Jesus' time.

You know what led them astray? Scripture. Look at the multitudes of legalists today, who are putting people into bondage and in bondage themselves. What is it that has led them astray? Scripture.

Scripture has made their life full of rules and regulations. Kept them in bondage. When you compare Scripture with Scripture, it is written and it is also written.

You know Scripture, you know the balance of Scripture, like God's given us two legs to stand on. Then, we're balanced Christians, we know the truth. It's written, you shall be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

It's also written, where Luke 6.36, you shall be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful. Teaching me that there is one area in my life where I can be perfect as my Heavenly Father is perfect on this earth. In every other area, I have to wait till eternity.

Till Jesus comes back. But in one area, I can be perfect like my Heavenly Father is perfect on earth. And Jesus did not give me a command which is impossible.

Matthew 5.48 is not a promise. We need to distinguish between promises and commandments. The promise is, one day we shall be like Him.

That's a promise. 1 John chapter 3. But be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect is not a promise. It's a command.

And it's not a command that we are to obey when we get to heaven. The Sermon on the Mount was not given for heaven. It was given for the earth.

And so, I see that Jesus expects me to be perfect as my Heavenly Father is perfect in the area of mercy. And mercy means to, first of all, to forgive others. And to be perfect in forgiving others means just this.

That if I have a grudge against ten people, I forgive ten people. Not nine of them. That's not perfect.

Nine out of ten is not perfect. If ten people have hurt me and I forgive all of them, then I've forgiven the perfect number. And I have to forgive them from my heart.

And if I'm eager, you know, it's not enough to forgive them externally. It says in Matthew chapter 18, that you know the story of the man who received a forgiveness of millions of dollars from the king. And then he went out and caught somebody by the throat who owed him ten dollars.

And locked him up in jail. And when the king heard about it, you read about in Matthew 18 verse 21 to 35, the king said, I forgave you millions of dollars. And you couldn't forgive that man ten dollars.

Why don't you come back and pay back your millions of dollars? That's the one passage in scripture that teaches the unforgiveness of sins. You've heard of the forgiveness of sins. Have you heard how your sins can be unforgiven? That means the sins that God forgave, and which he said, I will not remember, Hebrews 8, 12, will be put back into your account.

And the Lord says, pay up. That's the message of that story. And how is it our sins can be unforgiven, when I don't forgive somebody else? The greatest crime that any human being can do to me is about ten dollars worth compared to the millions of dollars I owe to God, which he forgave me on Calvary's cross.

That's the message in that parable. That this man was forgiven so much by the king, and he went and laid a hold of a person for owing him a trivial amount. And when the king heard it, he unforgave the forgiveness that he gave him earlier.

I believe that with all my heart. I don't believe what a lot of Christendom teaches. I believe what Jesus taught.

That your sins can be unforgiven. Not when you commit adultery. If you commit adultery, your sins won't be unforgiven.

No, no, no. You've just got to confess your sin of adultery, and God will forgive you. If you murder somebody, your sins won't be unforgiven.

There's only one sin that you can commit, by which all your past sins can be unforgiven, and that is the sin of a lack of mercy towards another human being who's done some harm to you. Do you realize how serious that is? Not to forgive somebody. Jesus taught us to pray, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, and so on.

Forgive us our trespasses, our sins, exactly like we forgive other people. He didn't tell us to ask for forgiveness of sins, no. He told us to ask for forgiveness of sins in exactly the same way we have forgiven others.

I'm praying to God, God, you know how I forgave that fellow who cheated me? Please forgive me in the same way. Well, how did you forgive that fellow who cheated you? Tell me. Well, that's how God's going to forgive you.

Do you keep on looking at him in a hard way? Well, you're asking God to look at you in a hard way. Because that's your prayer. Forgive me exactly as I've forgiven him.

Many people don't realize why God is not looking at them in tenderness. It's because you're not looking at somebody else in tenderness who hurt you. It's because you're wishing some evil for somebody else that your own Christian life is hindered.

So I want to say this because, you know, whenever, you know, many people ask me to pray for them when they're sick. And it's a great joy to pray for people who are sick. Many times I've seen them healed.

Many times, for some reason, I don't know why they're not healed. But whenever I pray for anyone who is sick, the other day I got an email from someone that some relative of theirs was demon-possessed. And he said, Brother Zach, I know that demons will listen even from great distances.

Wherever you are, can you pray and cast out that demon? I said, sure, I'll pray for that person. But I said, I want you to tell that person one thing. If there's anyone that person is not forgiven, please forgive immediately.

Seven demons can come back in otherwise. So when we pray, Father, forgive us our trespasses exactly like we have forgiven others. I want all of you to take just a few moments to think how you have forgiven the people who have harmed you the most in your life.

Whoever it is. Maybe it's some partner who divorced you. Maybe it's a mother-in-law or parents who abused you.

I don't care who it is. I want to ask you, have you forgiven them? Next question is, how have you forgiven them? Jesus said at the end of this parable that this man who did not forgive someone who owed him a trivial amount, and let me tell you this, I don't care what crime somebody committed against you, it's \$10 worth compared to the millions you owe to God which he forgave on Calvary. So don't meditate so much on the \$10 that person owes you.

Release him. When you hold it against him, Jesus said you're holding him by his throat. Ah, he did me like this, and my mother did this to me, and my mother-in-law did this, and my husband did this, and my so-and-so did this, and that neighbor of mine, and the boss of mine, you've got somebody you're holding by the throat, and Jesus says release him.

Release her. Release him. If you want to be released.

By whom? God's not holding you. No, no, no, no. The demons.

Listen to the word of Jesus, Matthew 18. When the king saw that this man caught somebody by the throat and put him in jail, it says here, the Lord moved with anger. God can be moved with anger at times.

And he's not angry against a murderer. I'll tell you, if you murdered somebody by mistake, or you committed adultery, slipped up, God won't be angry with you. He'll be merciful.

He'll forgive you. But if you don't forgive somebody, boy, he's going to be really angry with you. Because, you know, in a moment of hatred or provocation, a man may shoot and kill someone.

It can happen. In a moment of provocation, a man can commit adultery. That is sometimes in a sudden moment of provocation.

But unforgiving attitude, that is a deliberate choice that you make in your life. That I will never forgive that person for what he did to me. That's not a moment of provocation.

It's a deliberate choice, and therefore it is more serious in God's eyes than even murder or adultery, which one may have done in a moment of provocation, which can be forgiven. And Jesus said at the end of that prayer, if you don't forgive, your heavenly Father will not forgive you. You know, at the end of that prayer that he taught in Matthew 6, this is what he said in verse 15.

If you have 14 and 15, if you don't forgive others, your heavenly Father will not forgive you. I believe that with all my heart. I'll never forget a man who had come to India as a missionary and worked in India for 20 years serving the Lord.

I think he was around 30 years old when he came. He was 50 years old. He had been serving the Lord very sincerely.

And then he one day came in touch with our church and came to our conference. And for the next two years he came regularly. And he was really gripped by the truths we preached.

This is going back more than 25 years. And suddenly he got sick. And he was dying.

And he called me to his deathbed. And he said, Brother Zach, I want to tell you something. I came to India 20 years ago, 22 years ago to serve the Lord with great sincerity and sacrifice.

And I was treated so badly by so many pastors. They told lies about me. They spread scandals about me.

And I got so bitter against them. I was serving the Lord but I was bitter against the people who were spreading all these stories about me. And nobody ever told me in all those 20 years and all the churches I went to that if I didn't forgive others God wouldn't forgive me.

It's only two years ago when I came to your church that I heard you preach that if you don't forgive others who don't care who you are God won't forgive you and you'll go to hell no matter how much you serve the Lord. It shook me up but I saw it in scripture. You pointed out the verse to me and more than one verse.

And I took it seriously, he said. I decided to go through the list and forgive every single person I had a grudge against. And now I'm on my deathbed.

I want to tell you that I have forgiven everyone. I'm ready to meet my Savior. And I realized why God brought him in touch with us two years before he died.

He was a very sincere person but nobody had told him the truth. And he was a very famous evangelist and a lot of preachers wanted to conduct his funeral. He told his wife make sure nobody conducts my funeral except Brother Zach.

And he felt I had saved his soul by telling him the truth. There's a lot of preaching in Christendom which is not preaching the truth. They're telling people that God, Jesus will bless you you can be rich and you can be prosperous and you must have a positive attitude and all this type of stuff.

But say it the way Jesus said it. If you don't forgive others God will not forgive you. And he said at the end of this parable the Lord was moved with anger.

Matthew 18, 34. He handed that man he didn't just put him in jail. You got to read scripture.

He said don't just put this man in jail who was unmerciful to somebody hand him over to the torturers. There's a lot of discussion nowadays whether one should torture prisoners. Well this man was tortured.

He was tortured there. Don't just put him in jail but torture him until he repays all that he owes. He was unforgiven of all that he had been forgiven.

Who are those torturers today? Demons. God hands certain people over to the demons. Okay you can have this fellow.

Why Lord? Because he didn't forgive someone. God doesn't hand the murderers and the adulterers over to the demons but he does hand over the person who won't forgive somebody. And I'll tell you that's the one of the number one reasons why many Christians are sick.

It's not the reason for all the sickness. I told you 80% of sickness in the world are due to the fact that we live in a world which is under the curse. So you don't have to feel condemned.

But there are a number of sickness and I would say at least 20% of sicknesses among God's people are because they won't forgive somebody. They've got a wrong attitude. They've got a grudge.

They've been handed over to the torturers. And the demons trouble them and hurt them and harm them in their body because they won't forgive. And then Jesus said, now listen to this, the application.

Exactly like this, Matthew 18.35 My heavenly father will do to you. Who is Jesus speaking to, by the way? To Peter, verse 21. To the disciples.

He's telling Peter, my heavenly father will do this to you, Peter. I don't care if you're Peter, my senior apostle. My heavenly father will do this to you.

Whenever you read scripture, see to whom Jesus is speaking. This whole section begins in verse 21. Peter came to Jesus and said to him something.

And verse 22, Jesus said to Peter. What did Jesus say to Peter? So shall my heavenly father do to you, Peter, senior apostle. If you don't forgive others, he will hand you over to the demons.

He'll torture you. They'll give you all types of sicknesses. And don't just say, I'm an apostle of Jesus.

Well, he said that to Peter. You can be pretty sure he'll say that to you and me. And you don't just forgive others.

You forgive people from your heart. That's the important thing in verse 35. I've taken that very seriously.

Very, very seriously. Because first of all, I don't want to hurt my heavenly father. And secondly, I don't want to hurt myself.

I believe health is God's will for me and I want to be healthy. I'll tell you honestly. I don't want demons torturing me and troubling me.

I don't want them to come anywhere near me. I don't want them to have any power over me. You can say in the name of Jesus, I resist you, resist you, Satan, as much as you like.

You keep on saying it a hundred times, the demons will just laugh and say, Sorry, God's given me power over you. Because you haven't forgiven someone. I hope there's nobody sitting here like that.

I hope there's no one here who has not forgiven everybody from your heart. And I don't mean just believers. Maybe some unbelievers who have hurt you.

I believe the reason for a lot of depression, the reason for a lot of long-faced Christians. They haven't forgiven. Do you know the number of wives who haven't forgiven their husbands? Probably some sitting here.

Your husband maybe is still behaving in a bad way. Or he's got some habit that irritates you which he just doesn't give up. Maybe he's as silly as just throwing his clothes around.

Can you forgive him? Imagine, allowing demons to torture you just because your husband throws his clothes around. Have you ever heard of anything more stupid than that? And who suffers? You. Or vice versa.

Your wife, some habit of your wife. Supposing your wife is a nag, nags you, nags you, nags you. You've got to forgive and forgive and forgive.

Otherwise the demons torture you. They're already troubling your wife, giving her a nagging habit. Don't get it yourself as well.

I mean, it's enough. There's one person influenced by demons in the house. Why add to that? Forgive her.

Forgive her. Forgive him. There's so much of it.

I'm talking about Christians. I'm talking about born-again Christians whose hearts are not at rest. They are like the wicked, the trouble-see.

Always at unrest. Unrest because of what? Somebody didn't do things properly. He didn't do it properly.

She didn't do it properly. As if they themselves are perfect. What conceit! As if we never do anything wrong.

You expect perfection from others? The wicked are like the trouble-see. No rest. What did we read in Isaiah 57? The wicked are like the trouble-see.

And Isaiah 57, 20, its waters toss up the refuse and mud. You know, if you see a lake when there's no wind, it's absolutely calm. And you think, oh, what a beautiful lake.

Wait till a storm comes. A cyclone. And all types of things get tossed up to the surface.

The old tires that people have thrown into that lake. All types of things are in the bottom. Tins, rotten tin cans, all come up to the surface.

Have you seen that happen in a human being? Somebody gets upset with their marriage partner. And all the rubbish that was been in their life for 20 years comes up. What you did 20 years ago and what you said 15 years ago and what.

It's the same old thing. All the mud from the bottom tossed up. The wicked are like that.

It's like that story I heard of. A husband who went for counseling to a marriage counselor and said, whenever my wife and I have a quarrel, she becomes historical. Is it historical? You mean hysterical? He said, no, not hysterical.

Historical. She goes into history and recovers everything that took place in the last 20 years. He's hysterical too, but based on historical.

Are you historical? What happened? Have you forgotten what happened yesterday? Have you forgiven what happened yesterday? Do you want God to forgive you what happened, what you did yesterday? Even if we don't sin consciously, and that's the only sin that we are promised victory over, conscious sin, when it says sin shall not rule over you. It's only areas of our life we are conscious of that we can have victory. It's obvious I cannot have victory over areas of my life.

I don't even know our sin. But there's a lot of unconscious sin in all of us. And there will be in us until the day we die areas of our life that are unchristlike.

And the humble man or woman acknowledges that. And because, if you're humble and you're honest, you acknowledge, Lord, there may be a whole lot of areas in my life where I may be hurting others without even knowing it. I don't know how many of you have acknowledged that to God.

I have no problem acknowledging it to God. I've been a believer nearly 50 years. But I say, Lord, I've tried my best to get light on myself, but it's quite possible that there may be mannerisms in my life that hurt others.

I don't even know it. I'm not aware of it. Which inconvenience others.

Which inconvenience my wife. I don't even know it. I mean, she may be gracious enough to keep quiet about it, but there must be something.

I want light on myself, Lord. Now, if you acknowledge that, it's very easy for you to forgive someone else who's irritating you in some way. The only person who cannot forgive someone who irritates him or her is the one who feels, I'm so perfect.

I don't do anything wrong. I never say or do anything wrong. I never hurt anybody.

Well, if you're so blind, then I can only say, God have mercy on you. But there's nobody like that. There are many, many areas of unchristlikeness in us.

Where, you know, even a simple thing like bad breath, we don't know it. It comes out of us, out of our mouth, and we don't even know it. You may be absolutely sincere and yet have bad breath.

You know that? It's not a sin. But it's not very convenient for people around you. Not just bad breath.

Why do you think deodorants have such high sales? It's body odor. And we want to make it less inconvenient for people. Acknowledge that there are many unchristlike areas in you a million times worse than body odor or bad breath, which hurt others.

There are ways in which husbands speak to their wives. They may not feel there's anything wrong. I see that particularly in India, in Indian culture.

There's such rude ways in which sometimes husbands speak to their wives. It's one of my major tasks to correct it in our churches. And vice versa.

But it's so important, my brothers and sisters, be merciful. Be merciful. Be humble enough to acknowledge that there are many areas where you're unconsciously, unconsciously, thoroughly unchristlike.

Shall I repeat that? Unconsciously, thoroughly unchristlike. Acknowledge it. And therefore, it helps you to be merciful especially to your marriage partner.

I think that's how, you know, the devil likes to remind you, remind you of the ways in which your marriage partner, your husband or wife never seems to change. Always doing this thing the same way. How many times you've said, said, said, still doing the same thing.

Do you know there are things that you're also doing like that? The same? The devil won't tell you of that because you might repent. And you have more, a more sensitive voice to what the devil is telling you about your faults in your marriage partner than in yourself. I tell you the same thing applies to some parents and children.

I believe there are many children who are driven away from the Lord by religious parents. Religious parents who don't know the difference between being spiritual and Christlike and being religious. Religious is rules and rules and rules.

Jesus didn't come with rules. Moses came with rules. I'm absolutely convinced after having observed Christendom for 50 years that most Christians follow Moses, not Jesus.

Moses gave 10 commandments but many Christians have 1,000. But Jesus didn't come with rules. He came with mercy.

He came to give us the Holy Spirit. He came to lift us higher. He came to teach us to be merciful like our Heavenly Father is merciful.

I remember how the Lord, when I saw this, I said, Lord, I am serious. I mean it with all my heart. I don't care how long it takes.

I don't care what price I have to pay. I want to have a heart that is totally merciful to other people, to every human being in the world like my Heavenly Father. Have you ever prayed that prayer? If not, start praying today.

It won't happen overnight. But I was desperate. And I tell you God meets with you if you're desperate.

If you're sort of half-hearted and pray a half-hearted prayer, you won't get it. I'll tell you right now, you won't get it. Don't waste your time praying.

But if you're desperate, desperate, say, Lord, I don't want to live on earth without being merciful like you are. I'm sorry that I ignored that command of yours for so many years. Be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful.

I didn't even bother about it. Forgive me, I who thought I was so spiritual ignored your command to be merciful like God is merciful. Forgive me, Lord.

I want it from now on. I'm desperately going to seek for it. I tell you God will do it for you.

He'll show you where you're not, where you've forgiven somebody only externally. I remember once somebody done some harm to me. And I tell you honestly, to the best of my knowledge, I knew the Scriptures.

I forgave him with an act of my will. I said, Lord, I've forgiven him. Whatever he's done, it's forgiven.

And then sometime later, I heard something bad happen to him. Really bad. And I found a little delight in my heart.

And I saw the evil in my flesh. And the Lord showed me if you had really forgiven him from your heart, you would not be delighted when calamity hit him. You would feel sad.

Do you think God is happy when calamity hits anyone? Even his enemies? What did Jesus do when one of the soldiers who came to capture him, his ear was chopped off, calamity hit him through Peter. What did Jesus do? Have you come to capture me? Jesus of Nazareth, that's me. Have you come to capture me? Somebody chopped off your ear? I'll heal it.

He took time there to heal that person's ear. You know, we all say, Lord Jesus, I want to be like you. Oh, how moving it is to sing, to be like Jesus.

Oh, we really think we're spiritual when we sing that, right? I'll tell you, it's tested in such moments when you discover you're a little happy when somebody else who hurt you is suffering. Or the other way around, when you find yourself a little unhappy when something good happens to him. Either way.

And in that moment, if you can see yourself and say, Lord, that proves to me. That's what I said to the Lord. Lord, that proves to me I have not forgiven him from my heart.

Have mercy on me. Heal him, Lord. Forgive him.

Remove him from that calamity. And please heal me as well, the sinner. I prayed like that.

I thank God that he gives me light on myself. If you ask me, Brother Zach, what is the greatest mark of God's blessing on your life? I would say he gives me light on myself. In areas of my life that are

unchrist-like.

That is the mark of God's blessing on my life. I never think that God's blessing on my life is seen in hundreds of people being blessed through my ministry. No.

That's his work. He does it. As far as I am concerned, the mark of God's blessing on my life is he gives me light in such moments.

Because my desperate passion in life is to be Christ-like. The Bible says that he predestined me. Romans chapter 8. Romans 8 and verse 29 it says, Those whom he foreknew, and you and I are among them, he predestined.

Predestined is a great word that theologians and Bible scholars and professors and all keep arguing about and have disputes about. They start separate Bible colleges because they teach different things on predestination. You know what I've discovered? None of these people have a clue about what predestination is all about.

And how did I know that? Because I didn't go to a Bible school. That's all. God saved me from that.

These people are arguing about are people predestined to go to heaven or to hell. I said, not neither. The Bible says we are predestined, verse 29, to become like Jesus.

That's the predestination. Do you know what's written on your ticket? Destination? Not heaven. Become like Jesus.

Are you happy or disappointed? You thought you were going to heaven. No, the destination. Do you know what predestination means? It just means like if you take an airplane ticket, you got a predestination.

It's printed on your ticket where you're going to finally end up. That's your destination determined beforehand. Before you get into the plane, it's predestined.

You're predestined to go here. God has given me a predestination long before I was born because he knew I would be one of his children and you too. It's written on my ticket to become like Jesus.

I want to get onto the plane which is going in that direction. How do you know you're in the plane which is going in that direction? Every hour you'll be getting closer and closer to that destination. That's how you know.

If I'm predestined to go from here to New York and I find every hour I'm moving towards San Francisco, I'm going in the wrong direction. If in your life you're not becoming more and more like Christ, brother, sister, get off that whichever church or boat you're in. Get off that.

That's not the direction you ought to be going. You're on a wrong road. You're predestined to become like Jesus.

If your year has gone by and you're like one year and you haven't become a little more like Christ, you're on the wrong road. If you're still losing your temper like you were losing it 20 years ago, you're on the wrong road. I don't care which spirit you said you were baptized in.

If you're still lusting the same degree as you were lusting after women, the same way you were doing it 20 years ago, I don't care which church or what theology you have, you are on the wrong road. You need to turn around. If you can't forgive somebody and you're still in that same condition, you're not even making an effort to do it, you're on the wrong road.

Predestined to become like Jesus Christ. I see that destination clearly. And that's what I'm longing for.

I'll tell you honestly, I'm not longing for heaven. I'm longing to become like Jesus. Make that your goal.

The trouble with a lot of people is they want to become like heaven. They want to go to heaven. There are more songs about heaven than about becoming like Christ.

Because we've been brainwashed through the years that our destination is heaven. No sir. It's not.

It's becoming like Jesus. I did not get saved to go to heaven. I got saved because I wanted to be free from sin and become like Jesus Christ.

What did the angel say to Joseph? What is the first promise in the New Testament, Matthew 12:1? The angel told Joseph, Mary is going to have a child and you shall name him Jesus because he will take his people to heaven. No. He will save his people from their sins.

Or in other words, putting it the other way around, he will make his people like himself. Like Christ. To be saved from sin is the same as saying becoming like Christ.

It's another way of saying it. When I'm saved from all my sin, you know what will happen? I'll become perfectly like Christ. You shall call his name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins.

Or to paraphrase it, you shall call his name Jesus because he will make his people Christ-like. That's the meaning of the name Jesus. And one of the first and most important areas to be Christ-like is to forgive other people.

Because one of the first things we need is forgiveness of our sins. And to get our sins forgiven, we have to forgive others. And I don't care who you are and I don't care how many years you think you're a believer.

I want to tell you in Jesus' name, if you do not forgive others, your heavenly father will not forgive you. And if you want an authority for that, the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:15. Don't ever forget it. Matthew 6:15. If, I'm reading it exactly, if you do not forgive human beings, then your father will not forgive your transgressions.

Read carefully. If you do not forgive men, not God will not forgive you. He doesn't say God.

God is the word if he was talking to unbelievers. He's talking to believers. Your father.

When he says your father, who is he talking to? Is he talking to the Buddhists? Is he talking to the non-Christian? No. Your father. There are only certain group of people on earth to whom Jesus can say your father.

Your father will not forgive you your sins. Is there any human being who can ever get to heaven without their sins forgiven? You tell me. Impossible.

We can sing there's power in the blood, there's power in the blood all our life, but your father will not forgive your sins. Because you're not merciful towards your husband. You're not merciful towards your wife.

You're not merciful towards your children. You're so hard on them. And you think you're spiritual.

You're not. You're just religious. Dear brother, sister, let's repent.

Make your heart an island of peace that can be complete, that will never be disturbed by the things that happen around you. Did somebody call you Beelzebub? Follow Jesus who said, I'm an ordinary man. You call me Beelzebub, you're forgiven.

They spit on your face, it's okay. I remember once somebody came to me and said, oh, they were treating him so badly in the office and he was having problems in his home and his wife was yelling at him and all that. And I said, listen, has she crucified you yet? Nailed you on a cross or something like that? No, no, not that far.

Oh, you've got a long way to go, brother. Jesus went much further than that. He reached the other end and hung on the cross.

He said, Father, forgive them. You want to follow Jesus or what? Forgive, forgive, forgive. He taught us that.

I want you to turn to Matthew chapter 11 verse 28, a verse that we quote to unbelievers. Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Come to me all you who labor who are weary and heavy laden.

I will give you rest. And I look at it like this. I paraphrase it like this.

This is my own paraphrase of that verse. Jesus saying, come to me those of you who are sick and tired of your defeated life. Come to me those who are sick and tired of your un-Christ like thoughts and attitudes and behavior.

And I will give you rest. Your heart will become like an island of peace. Do you know that Jesus is not inviting people who are sick and tired of others.

Are you sick and tired of others around you? I'm sorry, you're not invited to this. This invitation is not for you. Are you sick and tired of your husband? Sister, I'm sorry, but you're not invited.

Are you sick and tired of your husband? I'm sorry, sister. You're not invited. Are you sick and tired of your wife? Brother, I'm sorry, you're not invited.

But are you sick and tired of yourself? You're invited. Are you sick and tired of your parents? Sorry young people, you're not invited. Are you sick and tired of yourself? Welcome.

Come to me all who are sick and tired of their own defeated un-Christ like life and behavior. I will give you rest. That's how I come to Jesus and I can testify today I have learned that rest.

He said, take my yoke upon me, verse 29. Come under my authority and you will find rest to your souls. There's a lovely verse in Hebrews which says, many people don't know the meaning of it.

It says in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 9, there is a Sabbath rest. Not for the unbeliever, no. For God's people.

It's written there. There's a Sabbath rest for God's people that they need. God's people need to come into this Sabbath rest.

The equivalent of the Old Testament Sabbath. It's an inner rest of soul, of heart where nothing disturbs you of what happens around you. There may be turmoil outside, your heart is at rest.

People are in a panic outside, your heart is at rest. People are doing all types of things against you, your heart is at rest. People criticizing you from morning to night, your heart is at rest.

Do you want such a life? Jesus says, come to me. Come under my authority and you will find that rest. I want to tell you, my dear brothers and sisters, when Jesus said, take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

He was asking you to come under his authority and you will find rest. You will find this rest. And I want to say to you in Jesus' name, if your heart, and you alone know that, if your heart is not in this rest 24 hours a day, that proves that in some area you have not come under the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

You haven't. And you're invited to come. It's the most wonderful life you can ever live.

I would not exchange it for anything in this whole world. I remember the day when one cult group took me to court in India, just a few years ago. They numbered me among the criminals and I don't know what, and I stood there because, you know, I had written a tract exposing their false teachings.

And I stood there and I tell you, the first time, I'd never been to a court in 59 years of my life. And I stood there and there was nobody in that whole court who was happier than me. I was the happiest person.

I was happier than the judge. I was happier than the lawyers. I was happier than my accusers.

My heart was at rest. Because I see my conscience is clear. I haven't done anything wrong.

I've tried to please God. I've done what's right before God. My conscience is absolutely clear.

No situation can bring unrest into your heart. Come under the authority of Jesus Christ. He's got all authority in heaven and earth.

Nobody can touch you without His permission. So come under His authority. And if you're in a church, if you don't know how to submit to authority in your home, you don't know how to submit to authority in the church that God has placed, you're not really submitting to the authority of Christ.

I've sometimes asked some mothers who tell me, Brother Zach, my children are so rebellious. I say, are you rebellious against your husband? Where did they get that infection from? You know how chicken pox can spread in a home pretty quickly? Or the flu? Where did they get that spirit from? Where did they get that attitude of you know, unsubmission to authority? Was it in the fact that you would not submit to your husband's authority? They got the infection. And you blame them for getting the flu and you got it first.

And you, Brother, you say your wife doesn't submit to you, you have a problem there. Do you submit to the elders in your church? She got the infection from you. There's authority that God's placed.

You say, well my church elders are not really godly people. Then leave that church. Go somewhere else.

But don't sit in a church and cause rebellion. I mean, if it's not a godly church, you should leave it. I left many godly churches.

Many churches. I didn't feel they were following God's word. There's nothing wrong in that.

If you find something better, you must move. But as long as I was in a church, I always submitted. Even where I disagreed.

If they were the elders, I submitted to it. When I felt that I couldn't continue there, I left. I remember somebody telling me, Brother Zak, you're such an unstable person.

When I hear your testimony, you left one church, then you left that, went to another church, then you left that, went to another church. I said, I've been unstable all my life. I used to be in first grade once.

I left it and went to second grade and then I left that and went to the third grade. I wasn't like these rock steady people who remain in first grade all their life and were quite happy. No.

I've been unstable all my life. There are some people who are happy to live in third grade Christianity all their lives. I wasn't.

I was always seeking for something better, something more. Because I knew the Bible had something higher to offer me. That's why Martin Luther left the Roman Catholic Church.

That's why those early Anabaptists disagreed even with Martin Luther. I would not go along with him. Many people claim that heritage, but they don't have that spirit of standing for the truth.

Dear brothers and sisters, God is calling us higher to a life of rest. I don't know whether you know that song which says, there is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God. I love it.

Dear brothers and sisters, there is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God. A place where sin cannot molest. Near to the heart of God.

Jesus, blessed Redeemer, near to the heart of God. He came to bring us near to God's heart to be at rest. And I'll tell you we'll need that more and more as we approach the end of time with all the turmoil that's going to come in this world.

All the tribulation and trials that Christians will face in every country. There will be persecution of some form or the other in every country and if you don't know the Lord now in times of peace you'll find it very difficult to stand for the Lord in that day. Money won't help you no matter how much you have.

It's the knowledge of the Lord that will help you in that day. And today Jesus says, come to me, come under my authority and learn to come to rest. It's the most important requirement in our time.

And your life will become radiant. People will come to you and wonder what the secret of your life is. Then you'll be able to witness to them.

Pray that your life will be an island of peace. That your home will be an island of peace. Not something that you know that you have to put up a front.

Is your home like that where you have to put up a front before people? Pretend that everything is peaceful whenever visitors come and it's not like that all the time. Why not ask the Lord to make it like that all the

time? All the time. People can come anytime.

You know, I love that passage where the two disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and said, where do you live? He said, come and see. Today people come to Jesus and say, Lord, where do you live? He says, come and see in this home, in this church. Go and live there and see how they live.

Can someone come and live in your home 24 hours and see how you live? You're all welcome to my home. Jesus has done a wonderful work and the reason is I was sick and tired of myself. I was so sick and tired of myself, I said, Lord, it was so bad, I was ready to give up the ministry.

But I said, Lord, I want you to change me. For years I tried to change other people. I want to change me.

I want you to change me. I don't want you to change my wife or anybody else. I want you to change me.

I'm the sinner. I'm the one standing in need of prayer. And God began to work.

I invite you to come to him like that. He will do a work in you where you no longer have to put up a front. Jesus can say, come and see.

See what I've done in that person. See what I've done in his home. See what I've done in his church.

He's not perfect. But he's understood what it is to come under my lordship and my authority. Dear brothers and sisters, don't be satisfied with the Christian life and experience that you already have.

There is something higher. And don't look around at Christendom. You won't find it there.

Go to the scriptures. You'll find it there. And the Holy Spirit, open your life.

Don't be afraid of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Don't be afraid of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Don't get turned away from there just because of the extremes you saw in charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity.

That is what happened to me. I didn't know anything about the baptism of the Holy Spirit when I was 22 years old. Somebody told me, go to the Pentecostal.

I went there. I saw what was going on there and I said, Lord, I don't want that. I want what Peter, James, and John got on the day of Pentecost.

And I got alone in my room and knelt down and prayed. I said, God, give me that. And I never went to those churches.

I'm not a part of those churches. But the Lord did for me what he did for Peter, James, and John on the day of Pentecost. There would have been no Christianity on earth today if it were not for the mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit that happened on the day of Pentecost.

And the devil has counterfeited that through the years to turn people away from it. Seek for the genuine thing. Come to me all who are sick and tired of themselves, Jesus says, and I'll give you rest.

It's the Spirit of the Lord who leads us to rest. Let's pray. Jesus will do that for you.

There's no partiality with God. If you see your own need, don't get discouraged. He's written a destination on your ticket that you should become like Jesus Christ.

Believe that. You, yes you, not somebody else. God's got a destination for you to become totally like Christ.

He says, come to me, I'll do it for you. But acknowledge your need and stop bothering about other people's need. Come and acknowledge your need before me.

Say, Lord, I'm the needy person. Lord, I'm the needy person. I want you to make my heart an island of peace.

I want you to make my home an island of peace in a world of turmoil. I want you to make my church an island of peace in a world of turmoil. Do the work in me, Lord.

He'll do it. Lord, we are needy people as we come to you. You see needy hearts crying out to you, Lord.

Pour out your spirit upon their life. Deliver them from the prejudices that hinder them from receiving your best. Deliver them from theological prejudices because of their traditions in their churches that hinder them from receiving the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

And deliver those who have got counterfeit experiences. Bring them into reality, Lord. The reality of being able to have the power of God in our life that enables us to overcome sin to serve you.

Help us, Lord, each one. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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