

(The Foundation and the Building) Five Danger a Christian Worker Faces

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the dangers that Christian workers face, including losing their first love for the Lord and being tempted by the love of mammon, and encourages listeners to choose between serving God and serving the things that money can buy.

Duration: 59:24

Scripture: Acts 1:4-5, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Revelation 2:4, Revelation 2:14

Topics: "Christian Witness", "Accurate Representation"

Description

In this video, Zach Poonen shares his concern about the inaccurate portrayal of Jesus Christ by many Christian workers, pastors, and churches. He emphasizes the importance of accurately representing Jesus to the world. Poonen encourages believers to show the love, compassion, purity, humility, and service that Jesus exemplified during his time on earth. He urges Christians to correct this wrong and present Jesus Christ accurately to the corners of the land.

Transcript

It's always a joy for me to speak to you, dear brothers and sisters, from so many parts of our wonderful country, and my prayer is that God will equip you to present Jesus Christ accurately to the corners of this land. I've been a Christian for forty-four years, I've been in full-time Christian work for thirty-seven of those years, and I've travelled the length and breadth of this country, and my own assessment is that Jesus Christ is not being portrayed accurately by most Christian workers, pastors, churches. And if you sense that, instead of criticising others, which anybody can do, any fool can criticise others.

It takes a man to correct that wrong. So don't be a fool and criticise. What you say is right, but it doesn't solve the problem.

But if you can go to wherever God calls you and say, Lord, I want to live such a life, speak in such a way, behave in such a way, that people can once again know what Jesus Christ was like. That is the greatest ministry that you can fulfil in India. When Jesus came to earth, he showed us what the Father was like.

He said in John 14, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. I can picture that the Father told Jesus in heaven, people on earth have got such a wrong picture of me. They think I am a policeman, they

think I am a dictator, they think I am a tyrant, they think I am a spoilsport.

Go down and show them what I am really like. And Jesus came and did such a perfect job, that in the end of his life he could say, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. And then he turned around to his disciples and said, as the Father sent me, so send I you.

So it is as if Jesus Christ is now saying to you and me, go to the corners of India. My calling is to India too. Go to the corners of this country.

They have got such a wrong picture of me, from much that they have seen in Christians, from what they have seen in Christian churches, Christian workers. Go out into this land and show them what I am really like. Show them my heart of compassion.

Show them the purity that there is in my life. Show them my humility, the spirit of service. Show them by the graciousness of your speech how I lived on earth.

My dear brothers and sisters, that is the basic challenge that comes to you and me. And that is why we need to fall on our face before God, repent of our sins, repent of our lukewarmness, and ask God to fill us with His Holy Spirit. Otherwise it is impossible to do this job.

In fact, Jesus told his disciples, go into all the world but wait, don't go yet. Wait till you are filled with the Holy Spirit. Otherwise you can't do this job.

And he says the same thing to us today. You need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and go out and represent Christ. So I want to share with you this evening five dangers that Christian workers face.

And I want to base what I am saying on Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. In those chapters you know that there are the messages to the seven churches, and also the messages to the seven messengers. In some English translations it says angel, but you know in our Tamil and Malayalam translations it says doodhan, which means messenger. So it's really addressed not to some angel in heaven, it's the same word messenger, to the messenger of the church.

That means the one in each church who was bringing the message every Sunday morning. That's the messenger of the church. And at the end of the messages to each church it says, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying, not to the messenger, but to the churches.

So therefore, the message was not only for the messenger, but also for the church and the churches. And out of these seven churches two of the churches, the church in Smyrna, the church in Philadelphia, did not get any rebuke. But the other five churches were rebuked strongly by the Lord.

They were Christian workers, these messengers, in these churches. And to each of the churches, each of these five churches, to each of these five Christian workers, the Lord points out where they failed. So we can learn lessons from where they failed, so that we who serve the Lord do not fail in the same area ourselves.

And if you can learn this when you are young, and avoid these dangers, and remember them all your life, can you imagine what a glorious life yours will be? And how you can end your life in tremendous glory. Number one, Revelation chapter two, to the messenger of the church in Ephesus. I'm not going to read it in detail.

The danger here was the danger of losing your first love for the Lord. It was a wonderful church, wonderful messengers. They were very hardworking, verse two.

They put out evil men from the church. They disciplined people who lived in sin. They were pure in doctrine, exposed false apostles.

They worked hard. They suffered for the name of Jesus, verse three. But all of this was useless, because, verse four, they had lost or left their first love for Jesus Christ.

In other words, when this Christian worker started out his ministry, maybe twenty years earlier in Ephesus, he was a young Christian, fervently in love with Jesus Christ, and passionate to serve Him. He didn't think of anything else. He was in love with the Lord.

He would spend time with Him, and everything he did, he did out of love for the Lord. He never counted anything a sacrifice, because he loved the Lord so much. But as time went on, that love disappeared.

He still did the works. Probably his congregation increased in size. Probably he had more meetings and Bible studies than he ever had before.

Probably he was invited to different places as a preacher. But all of that counted for nothing. With Jesus Christ, the head of the church, because the love was gone.

Many of you are young. I hope you have come here to serve the Lord because you love the Lord, not because you want a job. And if you have come because you love the Lord, that's the right motive with which to serve the Lord.

You remember when Peter, the great apostle, was called to the ministry, Jesus said to him, do you love me more than everything else? And then when Peter replied, he said, okay, then you can take care of my sheep and my lambs. So the Lord never asked Peter whether he would sacrifice, whether he knew the Bible. Those are not the main things.

Do you love me? Three times he asked him that question in John 21, and commissioned him to serve him. I want to say this to you. Please remember it until the end of your life.

In the early part of your Christian life, it's probably easier to preserve that love for the Lord. But I want to tell you, you can even lose it in three or four years in a seminary. I remember speaking to one young man in another seminary that I visited many years ago for their graduation service, and he got the award for the top student passing out in that class.

And he said to me, Brother Zach, I want to talk to you. And I spoke with him, and he was a defeated Christian. I said, how is your life today compared to what it was when you first joined the seminary four years ago? He said, much worse.

And that's at the end of four years in a seminary, and coming top of the class in all the subjects. It's very easy for that to happen. It's very difficult to preserve your love for the Lord when people around you may be seeking other things.

You have to fix your vision on Jesus alone and say, Lord, I'm not going to look at the people around me, and I'm not going to judge them. Be careful. Don't judge them.

It's not our business. Don't judge your fellow students. Don't judge your teachers.

I have made the mistake, I'm sorry to say, in my younger days of judging, and I suffered such a lot for it, I would warn you, dear brothers and sisters, do not judge. Mind your own business. Fix your vision on Jesus and say, Lord, I want to be devoted to you.

Everything I do must come out of a fervent devotion for you, and I never, never want to lose that love I had for you when I was first converted. Many of us, when we were first converted, I'm sure we were all really fervently in love with Christ because He loved us so much. Someone once asked me, how can we increase in love for Christ? I said, according to the word of God, I can suggest two things.

One, we read in 1 John chapter 4 that we love Him because He first loved us. I don't remember the exact verses. Somewhere towards the end of that chapter, 1 John 4, towards the end of that chapter, we love Him because He first loved us.

And I said, this is what I used to do as a young man of 19 and 20 years of age when I was converted. I used to sit and meditate much on the love that Jesus had for me as I saw it in the scriptures, and that made me love Him. So that's one thing we need to do all through our life.

I still do it today. I meditate on the love that Jesus had for me, just like I seek to preserve my love with my wife whom I married 35 years ago. Even much more than that, I want to preserve my love for Jesus Christ whom I came to know 44 years ago.

Preserve that. Meditate much on His love for you, and that's what will bring forth love in your heart for Him. And the second thing I said was, I said in Luke chapter 7, Jesus spoke a parable towards the end of that chapter, in the house of Simon the Pharisee, of two people who owed a debt to somebody.

One man owed 500 pence or whatever it was, another man owed only 50. And when both were forgiven, Jesus asked, who will love more? Simon said, naturally, the one who was forgiven more. So that's the second way we love more.

All of us love Him because we have been forgiven much. But some people realize they have been forgiven much, and some people don't realize it. So that's the second thing which I have sought to preserve through all these 44 years.

How much I have been forgiven. I'm not looking at the sins of others, it's not my business. I have failed the Lord so many times, and I think about that, how again and again and again He has forgiven me.

And as I come closer to the Lord, I discover new areas in my life of unchristlikeness, where I need to repent. So my life has become over the past few years a life of continuous daily repentance from things which God shows me as I get close to Him. And when I see how much He has forgiven me, like Jesus said in that parable, spontaneously, I love Him more.

So I want to say to all of you, think much about how much you have been forgiven. That's the second thing that will help you to love the Lord. You know in the Old Testament, people either did good works or evil works.

You know the tree of knowledge of good and evil that Adam took part of had a knowledge of only two things, good and evil. And that's what our conscience tells us. This is a good work, this is an evil work.

But when you come to the New Testament, you find another type of works. Good works, evil works, and dead works. You don't hear about dead works in the Old Testament.

Do you know what dead works are? Dead works are good works done without love for Jesus Christ. This man, all his works, wonderful works, his deeds, his perseverance, his keeping the church pure, keeping the doctrine pure, perseverance, endurance, suffering for Jesus' name's sake, the whole lot is dead works because he lost his first love. That's how serious it is, that everything we do becomes dead works when we've lost our love for Jesus Christ.

So preserve that at any cost. Don't be satisfied that you're doing something for the Lord. Sometimes you can go out into the fields, do something for the Lord, give tracts, bring people to Christ and feel happy in that.

No. See if it was a dead work or a good work. You may say, but there was results, there was fruit.

Yeah, that's true. That's because God loved those sinful people, not necessarily because he approved of what you did. You know once God told Moses in Numbers chapter 22, speak to the rock, and instead of speaking to the rock, he hit the rock.

But the blessing still came, the water still flowed. Even though God's servant disobeyed God, God still blessed because he loved the two million people who needed water, not because he approved of Moses. Afterwards he punished Moses for doing what he did and said, you won't enter the promised land.

So you can bless two million people through your ministry, and yet God may pull you off later on and say, I'm going to punish you now because you were not right with me. Jesus said that many in the last day will come to me and say, Lord, I cast out demons in your name, I did miracles in your name, I prophesied in your name, and he'll say, depart from me. I never knew you.

I never had a personal relationship with you. It's amazing that you can have a miracle ministry and not love Jesus Christ. A lot of people like that in the world today.

Do you want to live a life and have a ministry over which you'll have no regret when you get up to heaven and live millions of years in God's presence and then determine right now that you're never, never, never, never going to lose the love you have for Jesus Christ? And if you've already lost it, come back to it. This is fundamental. Let's go to the second thing.

In the message to Pergamum, Revelation chapter 2, verse 12. Here, one of the things, there are a number of things, but one of the things he mentions is, I have a few things against you, Revelation 2, verse 14, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, or the doctrine of Balaam. Now, to understand the doctrine of Balaam or the teaching of Balaam, you have to go back to the Old Testament.

What he did later on is mentioned here, that he put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, but the doctrine of Balaam began with something else, and I don't have time to turn to that right now. It's the danger in Christian work of the love of mammon. That's the second danger.

The love of mammon. That is the way Balaam walked. You read about it in Numbers chapter 22 to 24.

Very briefly, you know that story if you have read it. God told him, when King Balak comes and calls you to go and preach for him against my people, don't go. And so the first time the king's messengers came, he

said, I'm not coming.

But then, Balak sent messengers again, with more money. It's like a Christian organization coming and saying, okay, I'll offer you a higher salary. You didn't accept my first offer.

Here's a higher salary now. Double of what I offered you before. And you already heard a word from the Lord the first time.

You're not supposed to go there. But now when the salary is doubled or tripled, Balaam said, okay, let me pray about it again. Don't let that happen to you, that you want to pray about it again.

Because the level of mammon has increased. The offer is now higher. Jesus said in Luke 16 verse 13 that you cannot serve God and mammon.

He said there are only two masters in the world, God and mammon. And mammon relates to not only money, but all the things that money can buy. Money plus all the many good things.

I'm not talking about evil things. I'm not talking about pornographic books and dirty things. No.

I'm talking about good things that money can buy. To make our life on earth more comfortable and where our lifestyle can become a little more luxurious, we can get more clothes for our children, we can get a bigger house where we have a separate bedroom for the boys and a separate bedroom for the girls and a separate bedroom for the guests. There are many things money can buy.

Comfort, ease, entertainment. Money can buy so many entertainment gadgets nowadays. And it's very easy for the pull of mammon to pull a Christian worker away from the will of God.

That is the doctrine of Balaam. That's the teaching of Balaam. That's the way of Balaam.

And many, many Christian workers who when they started their Christian life were determined to serve the Lord at sacrifice and at any cost, in simplicity, in frugality. Frugality means not spending much on ourselves. You see these same people ten years later, and they are not the same.

I myself know Christian organizations in India where the workers were simple when they started out many years ago. Not today. The lure or the attraction of mammon has drawn them away from Jesus Christ.

It's a danger. Danger number two. Today, your students, you don't have much money, it doesn't tempt you so much.

This temptation will come after you've graduated from here, and you're going to decide what you're going to do with your life. And there's God, and there's money. And you've got to choose which one you're going to serve.

Many, many people have destroyed their lives because they tried to serve both God and money. It is not possible. It's not possible to serve God and the things that money can buy--pleasure, comfort, ease.

If I make a comfortable life, a luxurious life, an easy way of life, one of the things I definitely need if I serve the Lord, I will definitely miss God's will for my life in some area. I may still bring many souls to Christ and plant churches and do wonderful things, but it will all be dead works. The Bible says in Hebrews 6.1, I've got to repent of dead works, because money pulled me.

Keep this in mind. Even if you don't need it today, I guarantee in a few years you will need it, and remember what you heard. My personal conviction, and I'm absolutely convinced I'm right in this, is that Judas Iscariot was a wholehearted, fervent, devoted disciple of Jesus Christ when Christ first called him.

I don't have time to show that to you, but if you read in Luke 6.12, you will see that Jesus prayed all night before He selected the twelve from the multitudes who were following Him. And God the Father did not make a mistake, and He did not deliberately choose a deceiver just to fulfill some scripture. That would have been terrible if you accused God of doing something like that, and in fact it says there in that passage that Judas became a traitor.

He was not in the beginning. He became a traitor. When you become something, you were not like that in the beginning.

And that's the verse that teaches me that Judas Iscariot was just as wholehearted as Peter, James, or John. But he was carrying the bag, and the temptation of using this a little bit for myself, it was given for God's work, and to use it for God's work would have been right. But along with God's work, he began to use a little bit for himself, and that's what destroyed him, and that's what's destroyed thousands of Christian workers since that day.

They put their hand in and used God's money for themselves. You've got to be careful. William Carey was the father of modern missions.

He had a son called Felix, who was his co-worker up there in Serampore and where he worked in the Calcutta area. And people would send money from England, little bits of money across to him for his work. And he once wrote to his son, Felix.

He said, Felix, remember my son, money given for God's work is the most sacred of all money on the face of the earth. Be very careful how you spend it. Even if it is for God's work, be very careful how you spend it.

The Bible says, Jesus said in Luke 16, verses 10-12 I think it is, if you are not faithful with money, unrighteous mammon, who will give you the true riches? The true riches are revelation on the word of God, being able to understand things which are hidden from other people. The true riches are conformity to the likeness of Christ in our character. The true riches are the anointing of the Spirit in our ministry.

And Jesus says, if you want these true riches, be faithful with money. Very, very, very important. I hope you'll never forget it in all your life.

Demas left Paul because he knew, 2 Timothy 4.10, that he could not make much money working with Paul. So he decided to branch out on his own, start another organization and make money for himself. That's happened again and again and again in India.

Be careful. Danger number 2. And then danger number 3 is in the message to Thyatira, verse 18 onwards of Revelation chapter 2. Here it speaks about people who commit, verse 20 to the last part, acts of immorality. That's the third danger in Christian work, sexual immorality.

A very big danger. Many, many Christian workers have fallen in this area because the sexual desire is one of the strongest desires that we find in our body. And if you don't overcome it, if you don't know how to keep those passions under control by the power of the Holy Spirit, the devil will trip you up one day or the

other when you are not on your guard, and your entire ministry will be destroyed by one act of foolishness.

For five minutes of pleasure, you can ruin your whole life by one act of foolishness, and everything that your loving Heavenly Father planned for you. This sin destroys more people's ministries. See, a man can go after money, and then he can repent of it and come back and maybe recover his ministry.

But if you have come to a position of leadership in Christian work, and then you fall sexually, it is a very big danger and it's almost impossible to erase that image from you for the rest of your life. If you fell in it in the early days, okay, it's not so serious. I mean, sin is always serious, but once you come into a position of recognition and leadership, you're a pastor or a Christian leader, and you fall in this area, you can destroy everything God has planned for you.

So I want to say to you, this is an area where it's very, very easy to fall. Samson was mightily anointed by the Holy Spirit. When a lion came against him, he could tear the lion to pieces, but when Delilah came, he was finished.

Who is more powerful, Delilah or a lion? Think of that. These things are written for our instruction. I have been in the preaching ministry for over 40 years, and I'll tell you something from my experience.

Preaching gives us a power over people, and it's very easy for a preacher who is tremendously gifted, anointed, whom people look up to, who are helped and blessed and liberated from sin and legalism and from the bondage of Satan in their life through the ministry of an anointed preacher, he has such a high respect in the eyes of people that he can have power over them. And he can misuse that power by many ways. He can make them give him all their tithes and destroy himself by collecting their money.

He can become a little dictator, telling people what to do, making them run around doing things for him, so that he loses the spirit of a servant that Jesus had. Or he can have power over women, young attractive women, who are blessed through his ministry, challenged. And the Bible speaks about weak women in 2 Timothy 3, how preachers enter the homes of these weak women, who are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

There are weak women in our churches, there are weak women in India. And it's very easy for a preacher to be admired by these weak women. And they will come to you and say, Brother, I want some advice, I want some counsel.

And you feel sorry for them, seeing their tears. And you begin to pray with them, you begin to counsel them. And gradually you go one step further to comfort them, you put your arm around them.

And you never know where you'll go from there. Be extremely careful. Personally, I never counsel a woman, unless it's in a public place, seated in a hall like this, where everything is open.

Or she comes to my house, I call my wife, speak to her in my wife's presence. Or with another elder from the church. Never, never alone.

I will never sit in a room alone with a woman. I haven't done it, I won't do it. I'm 64 years old today, I still won't do it.

Much less should you do it, when the passions are so strong in your body. The Bible says, flee from immorality, run away from it. What a strong word.

Not just walk away. If you walk away, you'll be pulled back. Run in the other direction.

It's a very dangerous area. And you sisters, you've got to be careful too. You can mess up your life with an attraction to a man who may not be the one whom God has chosen to be your marriage partner.

There's nothing wrong in being attracted to somebody of the opposite sex. If you consider marriage, go to an elder brother, consult him, and go about it in a decent, proper way. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 3 to 5 says, each man must know how to get a wife in a proper way, in uprightness and holiness.

That's the right thing to do. Be very careful. You know, when a boy and a girl come together, the pressure on the accelerator increases, and it's the girl who must apply the brakes.

Be very careful in this area, because it is definitely a significant danger in the lives of many, many Christian workers. Through the years, even in the last thirty, forty, fifty years, so many people in our country, in other countries, have fallen in this area. Some who are well known have fallen publicly known to everybody.

Many others have fallen in secret. They are not so well known, but the anointing has gone from their life. Whether you fall publicly or secretly, the anointing will go.

God cannot endorse an impure man in His ministry. And that's why in your youthful days you must fight this passion. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 28, I keep my body under subjection, lest, after having preached to others, I myself am cast away.

There is a tremendous amount of internet pornography today, that young men, believers, I'm talking about believers, are indulging in, secretly. They don't go and buy pornographic books, they just got a click on some thing on the internet. Be careful, my brother, sister.

It's not worth it. For a few moments of pleasure, you can have regrets for millions of years in heaven. Think of that.

Don't be like Esau, who for a little pleasure sold his birthright. You got a birthright to be an anointed servant of God in this land. I know God gripped me with that when I was twenty years old.

I saw that God had a plan for my life when I was twenty years old, and I said, God, please help me. Don't let me miss that plan for your life. I don't care what price I have to pay.

I want to endure till the end as a faithful, anointed servant of God. I want to be a living demonstration to this country, that you can endure till the end as a faithful, humble, anointed servant of God. Be one of those.

India needs many such. India needs prophets. Perhaps you are called to be a prophet.

Well, then the devil will do everything possible to destroy you, particularly through the sexual area. Danger number four. Revelation chapter three.

The danger of seeking a name for ourselves. To the messenger of the church in Sod is right, verse one, the last part. You have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead.

How did you get that name? People usually get a name by seeking for it. Beware of the danger of seeking a name for yourselves as a great preacher, as a great miracle worker, as a man who has brought so many people to Christ, or planted so many churches, or done this or done that. Fear it.

There are many things God will give us--blessings, gifts of the Spirit, grace--but there is one thing He will never give us. Isaiah 42, verse 8 says that He will never give us His glory. The glory belongs to the Lord.

We say that in the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, who art in heaven, ends with, Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Don't let that just be a statement that you make at the end of your prayer.

I'm not supposed to touch the glory of God. That is reserved for God alone. I'm never supposed to take credit for anything I do, because the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 7, what have you got that you did not receive? What have you got that you did not receive? If you received it, why do you glory as though you had not received it? Any ability that God gives us, any ministry that God does through us, it is He, it is the Holy Spirit.

People will come and praise you. Don't touch it. Don't touch it.

Give it to God immediately. Frequently go alone to some lonely place, or if there's no other lonely place, on your bed at night. Fall on your face before God and say, God, I never want to touch your glory.

I never want to take credit for anything I ever do in my life. It's all yours. The Bible speaks about Jerusalem and Babylon.

Jerusalem is the true church. Babylon is the false church. The mark of the true church is, we read in Revelation 21, it shines with the glory of God.

The mark of the false church is that it shines with the glory of man. You read in Daniel chapter 4 that Nebuchadnezzar walked on the high walls of Babylon, his palace, and he said, is this not Babylon, which I have built by the might of my strength and for the glory of my majesty? And as soon as he said those words, God made him a madman for a number of years, till he learned to give the glory to God. He was a heathen king.

You read in Acts chapter 12, Herod gave a tremendous, it wasn't even a Christian message, just a great speech, political speech. And he took the credit to himself, and it says worms ate him up on the platform. It's a very serious thing to touch the glory of God.

Worms may not eat you up physically, but they have eaten up many preachers spiritually, because they touched the glory of God. They took the credit to themselves, they sought a name for themselves. Beware of writing a report in order to get a name for yourself.

When you read somebody else's report, and you're tempted to be envious, jealous, because of the wonderful work he's doing, and you're tempted to write something to impress, beware of that. That's where you will exaggerate and state things which are not true. That's where you will expand the truth, and it becomes a lie.

Why? Because you're not satisfied with the glory that God gives. You also want the glory and honor of some man whose breath is in his nose. Why do you want glory from a man? Do you know that whenever

you say something, or do something, or write something to impress somebody, you are actually worshipping him? I don't know whether you realize that.

When you say something in your testimony or anything to show somebody that either I'm a great guy, or I'm better than that other fellow, or somebody preaches something and you get up to show that you can preach better than him, or somebody sings and you want to show that you can sing better than him, or somebody plays an instrument and you want to show that you can play it better, it's all evil. It's all to get a name for yourself. It's the sin of Lucifer that made him a devil in a moment, and it will make you a devil in a moment too.

To seek a name for yourself. Tremendous danger in Christian work, and plenty of it today, because people send reports and emails and everybody wants to show that a great revival is taking place where I'm serving the Lord. I'm amazed when you read all the reports going out of India, you think a revival is taking place in every corner of India, you think all one billion people are saved.

It's not true. It's because of this tremendous lust to seek a name for yourself. Are you happy to wait for the final day when Jesus will call you up front, and before the whole world say, well done, good and faithful servant? Or do you want the approval of empty men? No.

I remember once the Lord gave me a picture of this, like this. He said if you take a camera and take thirty-six pictures, let's say I take pictures of the work I have done for the Lord, and if I'm ignorant of photography, and I take out that reel and open it all out, what will happen? Everything's gone. As soon as he's exposed to the light, all those pictures are gone.

You've got to keep it dark. You've got to put it in the darkroom. Do that with your work.

Do that with your prayer life. Let nobody know how much you pray. Let nobody know how much you fast.

I mean, when we do it together as a church, naturally people will know. I'm not talking about such things, but I'm talking about the many private things we can do. The sacrifices you make for the Lord, don't let anybody know about it.

The money you give, don't let anybody know. Your Father will reward you openly. Never, never, never seek the honor of men for anything.

Anything. It will be strongly tempted, because everybody else is in that competition. Pull out of that race.

Pull out of that race and say, I'm not in that race. I want to live before God's face. This is the reason why many people don't have faith in these days, real faith.

People have faith for the wrong things nowadays, but not faith for overcoming sin and partaking of the nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, how can you believe, how can you have faith, John 5, 44, when you receive glory from men and not from God? You know the reason why many people don't have faith? They look for glory from men and not for the glory that comes from the only God. Danger No.

5, Revelation 3, verse 15. The danger of losing the fire. The messenger of the church in Laodicea says, I know your deeds.

You are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot, but because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'll spit you out of my mouth. Tremendous danger.

The fire with which God fills us when we are first baptized in the Holy Spirit, it's very easy for that fire to cool down. Many, many people who were baptized in the Holy Spirit once upon a time, today all they have is a date, a date on such and such a date. I say, I don't care for dates.

God doesn't care for dates. Dates are found in graveyards. You go to the graveyard, you'll see plenty of dates.

Do you have the fire today? Have you ever had the fire in your life? You know there's a saying in the world that something is better than nothing. If something is better than nothing in the kingdom of God, then to be lukewarm must be better than being cold, right? But it's not true. In the kingdom of God, something is not better than nothing.

If I were to paraphrase these words, Jesus was saying, you either have zero or you have 100%. Don't be this 50-50 type of person. You either live 100% for the world, zero for God, or you live 100% for God and not for yourself.

If you live like that, you'll have the fire until the end of your life. There'll be a fire in your preaching that people's hearts will burn when you speak. Wherever you go, until the end of your life, never lose the fire.

Never mind if you lose your salary, never mind if you lose your house, never mind if you lose anything, but don't lose the fire of God in your life, my brother, sister. Be willing to pay any price to keep the fire of God burning in your heart. Paul told Timothy, stir up the gift that is in you.

Fan to a flame that gift God put inside you. We have to fan it to a flame. That's why people ask me, how can I keep it? How can I keep the fire burning? I say, keep your conscience sensitive.

As soon as you're aware of a sin, set it right. If you've hurt somebody, go immediately and ask forgiveness. Don't wait till tomorrow.

If you've got some money on your hand which is not yours, go and return it. If there's something in your life which you have some area where you have sinned, you hurt somebody or you did something wrong, go before God. Ask Him to forgive you.

Go to that person and ask Him to forgive you. Do it ten times a day if necessary because you don't want to lose the fire. Keep your conscience clear.

The second thing you need to do to keep the fire burning is always humble yourself. Always take the lowly place. God showed me the glory of that many years ago in my life, that God gives His grace to the humble.

Water always flows to the lowest place first. And if you go to the lowest place, you'll find the river of God flowing there in plenty. Always humble yourself.

Let the other person take the prominence. Let the other person get the honor. You humble yourself.

You hide yourself. You go down. If somebody insults you, keep your mouth shut because you don't want to lose the fire.

You want to set everything right in your life immediately. Only God can give us the fire. I cannot create the fire for myself.

The sons of Aaron, we read in Leviticus, I think it's chapter 10, tried to make fire themselves and God smote them. We're not supposed to make fire ourselves. We're to go before God and allow Him to baptize us in fire.

That is the greatest need of the hour. There are many counterfeit baptisms in the spirit, in Christendom today, even in India. And how do you know that? Because it doesn't seem to bring holiness in the lives of people.

The fire brings holiness. The fire brings a power. The fire brings a passion, a devotion to Christ.

It'll equip you for the ministry to which God has called you in the body of Christ. Whatever it is, I never want to lose that fire. God baptized me in the Holy Spirit in fire some years ago and I've many, many times gone before God and said, God, don't let me ever lose the fire in my life.

I don't care what else I lose. I don't care if I lose the good opinions of all of Christendom in India, but I never want to lose the fire in my life. Be passionate.

India needs you. India needs me. There's a tremendous need in our country.

I pray often to God that God will give me a long life, not because I love this rotten old earth, but because India is a very needy land. I pray that God will give me health, not because I enjoy traveling, but because India is a needy land. You are young.

You have life ahead of you. Beware of these dangers and live for God. And you'll have millions of years in eternity to be thankful that God protected you from the snares that many other Christian workers fell into.

Let's pray. While ahead, so bowed in prayer, my dear brothers and sisters, my dear young brothers and sisters, I have spoken from my heart to you because I've seen what has happened to many young people like you in this land, and I pray it won't happen to you. I would weep if it happens to you.

Fine young people, come here to serve the Lord. You can miss out on God's will for your life. Don't look at other people.

Don't look at other Christian workers. Don't judge them. Look at the standards of God's word and live there.

And don't let these things just be in your notebook. Let it be written in your heart permanently, these five dangers. Say, Lord, protect me from all of them.

Heavenly Father, I believe there are many, many sincere people crying out to you today, here this evening, who sincerely want to serve you. I pray you'll give them their heart's desire, that they'll be able to look back over their life many years from now, and in eternal ages in heaven, over a life lived in a worthwhile way for Jesus Christ. I ask in Jesus' name.

I ask in Jesus' name. Our mailing address is Christian Fellowship Centre, Forte da Costa Square, Bangalore, 560-084-INDIA If you would like to receive a weekly message by Zak Poonen by email, please send us your email address to cfclit at touchtellindia.net. That is cfclit at t-o-u-c-h-t-e-l-i-n-d-i-a dot net. The Lord bless you richly.

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