

The Fruit of Our Service Is Holiness

by Zac Poonen

The fruit of our service to God is sanctification, which results in eternal life, and is achieved through the new covenant, not the old covenant.

Duration: 58:08

Scripture: Proverbs 4:18, Matthew 7:21, Romans 6:22, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 2:14, 1 John 3:2

Topics: "Personal Sanctification", "Christian Service"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the return of Christ, focusing on the need for personal sanctification and service to the Lord. It highlights the dual hope of seeing Jesus and becoming like Him, encouraging believers to purify themselves daily until they attain Christ's standard of purity. The speaker stresses the significance of serving the Lord in all aspects of life, leading others closer to Christ, and living in readiness to meet the Lord with boldness and confidence.

Transcript

What should be the result of our serving the Lord? Let me turn to Romans chapter 6. Here we see of verse 22, having been freed from sin, that's the first step, and enslaved to God, that is becoming a slave of God or a servant of God, which I trust is what all of you are or seek to be. You derive your benefit or you have your fruit from serving God. What is that fruit? It results in sanctification.

So, if I'm really serving God, you know a lot of people think they are serving God in the world, and I've been around 50 years watching such people. A lot of people who think they are serving God will discover in the day they stand before the Lord that they were only serving themselves. In one of the paraphrases of Matthew 7, where Jesus says to those people who did miracles in his name, get away from me, the paraphrase says, you were just using me to promote yourself.

And there's a lot of that in Christendom today, using Jesus to promote oneself. But what is the real result that should come from serving the Lord? Sanctification. In other words, if I'm really serving the Lord Jesus Christ, my life will become holier and holier the more I serve him.

Every year will find me more Christ-like as a result of my service. And the people closest to me will recognize that. If you're married, your husband or your wife should be able to see an increase in Christ-likeness in your life, or your colleagues, people who live with you, work with you.

If that is not happening, we need to ask ourselves why? Have we missed out on something? That is the result of serving the Lord. And the outcome, finally, it says in that verse, is eternal life. I would encourage you to meditate on that verse sometime and ask God to give you revelation.

In Proverbs 4, in verse 18, it speaks about the path of the righteous. We know that in the new covenant we are justified by faith, and the righteous shall live by faith, and we become righteous through faith. But then after we become righteous, there's a path of the righteous described here in Proverbs 4, 18.

It's compared to the light of the dawn or the sun rising. It's like years and years of darkness in which we were unconverted, and then a day came in our life when we were born again. That's like the sunrise.

And God's plan for our life from that moment onwards, till the day Christ returns, is compared here to the sun rising in the sky, getting brighter and brighter and brighter and never backsliding. The sun never goes back till the perfect day. That's when Christ returns and we shall be like him.

So, if that is not happening in our life, according to this verse, we are not on the path of the righteous, or we have sidetracked or deviated from it somewhere. Now, this doesn't mean that we concentrate. We're not supposed to be hermits and monks just concentrating on becoming holy.

That's why I'd read Romans 6, 22 first. It's as we serve that sanctification comes. It's not by going and locking ourselves up in a monastery.

So, God's will for us is that. And let me turn you to another verse now, which is a very well-known verse, Romans 8, verse 28. This is a very well-known verse among most evangelical Christians, that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him, those who are called according to his purpose.

I mean, that is an absolute statement. All things. All things means all things.

That our God in heaven is such a sovereign ruler of this entire universe, and he's our father, our dad, that he's in control of every event in my life. And all the people who come across my path, and the good things they do to me, and the bad things they do to me. And I have discovered in my life, God is so much in control that even our mistakes, he turns to profit.

If you have faith for that, I have faith for that. That even the, not talking about deliberate sins, I'm talking about we make so many mistakes in our life. I made numerous mistakes in my life, but God's turned them for profit in my life.

I've learned such a lot from it. It's humbled me and enabled me to press on more. But here it says that God turns, makes it work for good.

And then, if our mind is not renewed, we don't understand what that good is. We can think of some earthly good, that if I miss getting something, I get something better on earth, something earthly. If I missed marrying one person, I'll marry a better person.

That's not the good. I mean, that may happen, but that's not the good that God's speaking of here. The good that God's speaking of here is mentioned in the next verse, that those whom he foreknew, he predestined, and to be conformed to the image of his son.

This is the only predestination that the New Testament speaks of. There is no predestination to heaven or hell. It is predestination to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, in other words, God has determined what my final destination is to be. Now, the average Christian, if you were to ask him what his destination is, he'd say heaven. But you never find that in Scripture.

The destination God has planned for us is total conformity to the likeness of Christ. And we may go to heaven, but that's secondary. It is secondary.

We don't go to heaven as it were. We go to be with Jesus, and we'll be conformed to his likeness. And even when he returns, so that, by the way, is the good towards which everything is working.

So good towards which all things are working is not to make my life more comfortable or to give me things that I think will I need or want, but to conform me to the likeness of Christ. And if I see that as the ultimate good, the greatest good that God can do for me is not give me health, not give me money. That was an Old Testament gospel, unfortunately being preached by many today.

The greatest good that God can do to any of us is to conform me to the image of Jesus Christ, his son. And that is the good towards which he makes everything work. And that is God's will for us.

And so, when we see that as our destination, I look at it like a plane ticket with a destination mentioned on it, New York. Well, when I go to the airport, I'm going to look for a flight that takes me to New York. I'm not going to look for the biggest plane or the prettiest plane.

I'm going to look for the plane that takes me to New York. So, I must look for that type of fellowship and Christian environment that will help me to get to my destination, which is to become totally like Christ. That must be my goal, and I must have it fixed on my mind.

And it is to this goal that God will constantly help me. This is the meaning of what it says in Hebrews. Let us leave the elementary principles of Christ, and let us press on to perfection.

A lot of Christians are afraid of the word perfection. We shouldn't be. It is God's will.

It says in Hebrews 6 and verse 1 that we must press on to perfection. And it says in 2 Timothy and chapter 2, chapter 3, sorry, verse 16, all scripture is given ultimately, verse 17, so that the man of God may be perfect. So, when we see this as the goal, we see why the law could never bring us here.

That's why the Lord abolished the law and established a new covenant. And I have discovered in my travels and in meeting Christians that many Christians have not understood that the old covenant has been abolished completely. It's obsolete.

Not the Old Testament, that's part of the Bible, but the old covenant, the law which God gave to Israel. It's been abolished. It's obsolete.

It says in Hebrews 8 and verse 13, when he said a new covenant, he has made the first one obsolete. It's clear. But yet, many Christians haven't understood that.

And that's the reason why there isn't the sanctification that there should be in their life. Because the law can never sanctify anyone. The law could not make anyone perfect.

There's no such thing as pressing on to perfection in the old covenant. We need to recognize the old covenant is abolished. Look at the tremendous emphasis there is on tithing in many churches.

Never mentioned in the New Testament, never taught by Jesus, never taught by the apostles, but taught by multitudes of pastors today. It's a result of covetousness. It's part of the old covenant law.

And there's a man tends to want to go to the law. You remember what Jesus said. I don't know why it is, but Jesus seemed to say that prophetically when he was speaking about the new wine and new wineskins in Luke chapter 5. And he said when people drink, taste the new wine and they say in Luke 5:39, the old is good enough.

That's amazing. The old covenant is good enough. In the new covenant, take the matter of tithing.

What Jesus says is give, not tithing. God loves a cheerful giver, not out of compulsion, not out of necessity, and not to get a reward. But because we love Jesus, that's why we give.

God loves a cheerful giver. And that's just one area. In the old covenant also, let me show you in Psalm 103.

Now, whenever I speak, I quote scripture a lot. And part of the reason is so that your faith may not rest in the wisdom of man, not in my wisdom or my cleverness, but on the Word of God. So, do listen to these scriptures, which are far more important than what I say.

Psalm 103, what David said a thousand years before Christ came was, bless the Lord, O my soul, who has given me many benefits. Don't forget all his benefits. And he mentions four of them.

Number one, verse three, he is pardoned all my iniquities, forgiveness of sins. That's not a new covenant blessing. It's an old covenant blessing.

Blessed is the man whose sins are covered. And here in Psalm 32, and here in Psalm 103, pardons all my iniquities. Secondly, he heals my diseases.

Again, not a new covenant blessing, physical healing. Third, redeems my life from the pit of hell, deliverance from hell. It's not a new covenant blessing.

And number four, verse five, satisfies my years with many good things, material benefits. So, these are the four benefits of the old covenant. Forgiveness of sins, healing from sicknesses, deliverance from hell, and material blessing.

Does that sound familiar to the gospel that is being preached in many places today? It's an old covenant gospel. But who has the wisdom to understand it? In the new covenant, as soon as you open the pages of the new covenant, as soon as you open it, the very first page, the very first promise goes beyond these four. I don't know whether you've noticed it.

Do you know what is the first promise in the New Testament? Matthew 1 and verse 21. You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Not he will forgive their sins.

That is Psalm 103. He will save his people from their sins. I've quoted this verse to different people, and I said, have you understood it? When you say Jesus is your savior, what has he saved you from? Has he saved you from anger? You say, no.

Has he saved you from lustful thinking? No. Has he saved you from grumbling and complaining? No. But you're born again, right? Yes.

Then what happens when you do commit all these sins? Well, I confess it to Jesus and he forgives me. Then call him by the way you know him. He's your forgiver.

He's not your savior, because he hasn't saved you from anything. You say he saved you from hell. That's in the future.

But what is he saving you from right now? Nothing. He's forgiving you, forgiving you, forgiving you. He's your forgiver, but he's meant to be our savior.

I'm just trying to show you how the devil has robbed Christians of their inheritance. He robbed me of that for 16 years after I was born again. I was just like any other believer, defeated, defeated, defeated, and preaching as well, till God brought me to a point of desperation.

And I said, Lord, something's got to change. I can't continue like this. I was ready to quit the ministry, because I was just being a hypocrite.

I said, Lord, I really need to experience a genuine infilling of the Holy Spirit. So this is the first promise of the New Testament. He will save his people from their sins, from their sinful ways, from their sinful habits.

And that links up with what the first verse we quoted in Romans 6, which is, the fruit of our service is sanctification, which is increasing salvation from the power of sin. So what is the second promise? I don't know whether you know. No, what is the second promise in the New Testament? If we're coming into the new covenant, the old covenant being abolished, the second promise in the new covenant is Matthew 3 and verse 11, where John the Baptist says, in the last part of that verse, Jesus, He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

Now, the word baptism has got a religious sort of ring about it. But, and the reason is because it's not an English word. The average English speaking person doesn't know what baptism is.

It's a religious word. And it's actually a Greek word, which has been transliterated, not translated, transliterated means it's been taken into Greek and made into an English word, baptizo, or bapto has been made into baptized. And in the Greek, it just means immersed.

It's a plain word used in everyday Greece 2,000 years ago, meaning immersed. You'll be immersed in the Holy Spirit or filled with the Holy Spirit. It's the same thing.

And that is what changed the apostles and brought them into the new covenant. Now in the old covenant, the spirit was upon people, many, many people, even Samson had the spirit upon him. David had the spirit upon him, but it didn't change their lives.

Samson lived in adultery. Most of the time, David committed adultery. Many of the old covenant people, there was no deliverance from sin in their life.

Sanctification was not a part of the old covenant, but the spirit is upon them, and they could bless millions. I mean, there were 2 million people in the wilderness whom Moses led, and they were blessed through the anointing upon Moses, but it was upon, not in. And I picture it like if you have a cup here and a lid on it, and the spirit is poured, if that cup is a picture of your heart or your spirit, and the Holy Spirit is poured, it overflows over you, the spirit upon, upon, upon it, it can bless millions.

But the heart is not changed. Samson's heart was not changed. And the old covenant, the hearts of people were not changed.

But in the new covenant, that lid was removed. Or if you want a more scriptural picture of that, in the old covenant, there was this tabernacle which symbolized man's person, outer court, holy place, most holy place, symbolizing man's body, soul, and spirit. Man is a trinity, 1 Thessalonians 5, 23, made in the image of God, body, soul, and spirit, corresponding to outer court, holy place, and most holy place.

And between the most holy place and the most holy place was this veil, this thick veil, which symbolized that God could not get into man's spirit, and man could not get into God's presence. God dwelt in that most holy place. So, until that veil was rent, there was no way of penetrating and getting into man's spirit.

Everything that people did in the old covenant, even their worship, was body and soul. That's all. You remember what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. He said, time has now come, now, when the true worshippers will worship in spirit, not just in body and soul, like in the old covenant.

Body and soul worship is good. I do it. Raise my hands, clap my hands, use my intellect, emotionally moved, excited, weep, when you praise the Lord, all very good.

But if I stop there, it's still old covenant worship. But once I allow the spirit of God to come within and stir my spirit, worship comes in the spirit, which I think very few Christians have experienced. A lot of what is called praise and worship in many Christian churches is the emotion of the soul.

I'm not against it, it's good. But God wants more. The Father seeks, Jesus said, for such people to worship him.

So, when the veil was rent, the spirit could come within man's spirit, and that's what happened on the day of Pentecost. In John chapter 7, when Jesus spoke about rivers of living water flowing out, for many years, I used to think of it only as the emphasis in my mind was always rivers, rivers, rivers. But then I was amazed by a verse below that, which said in John 7 39, that Jesus was speaking here of the spirit whom those who believed in him were going to receive.

And listen to this, John 7 39, the last part, the spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified. And then it really puzzled me because there were so many instances in the Old Testament where the spirit was definitely given. So many people that Gideon, it says Gideon was clothed with the spirit, but his life didn't change.

He became an idol worshiper later. So, what does it mean the spirit was not given? The spirit was not given in this way in which Jesus had just spoken. And the emphasis in verse 38 was not primarily on the rivers of living water, because rivers of living water flowed even from the ministry of Moses and John the Baptist.

Sure, look at the millions that were blessed through those prophets and all those men in the Old Testament upon whom the spirit was. But John 7 38 says now it is going to come from the innermost being. That's the emphasis here.

He who believes in me from his innermost being, this river is going to flow. It's not going to be upon him like the old covenant from within, is going to flow out. And so when the veil was rent and the spirit of man was open or the lid was removed from the cup, the Holy Spirit would first come and fill man's spirit from

within.

It would overflow and bless millions. And so I often used to wonder, look at these many people who stand in the last day before Jesus saying, Lord, we prophesied in your name. We evangelized in your name.

We did miracles in your name. Not in the name of some heathen God. We did many miracles.

We cast out demons in your name. These are the things that happen wherever evangelism takes place. Casting out demons and miracles and like you've seen the acts of the apostles.

And yet the Lord says to them, depart from me. It's almost as saying I don't want to have anything to do with you. Your ministry, all that you did doesn't impress me because there's sin in your life.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that what Jesus said there, that many are going to stand before him in the last day and boast about the amazing things they did for him in Jesus name. And for which they thought they would get a great commendation when he finally came back and he turns around and says, there was sin in your life. I can't explain it.

Maybe it was like the spirit was upon Gideon who became an idolater or like the spirit was upon Samson who lived in sin in his private life. Maybe that's how those people served. But that was not new covenant service.

Because that service did not bring sanctification like we heard right at the beginning. The fruit of your service is sanctification and the outcome eternal life. So it's from the innermost being.

New covenant ministry is from the innermost being. And the first time that Jesus spoke to his disciples about the Holy Spirit was at the last supper. And he told them, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments.

That's sanctification. Keeping all his commandments. And you just have to go through the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7 to see how tough that is to keep.

Never getting angry, never lusting with your eyes, never telling a lie. Your yes is yes, your no is no. Loving all your enemies, forgiving everyone who's hurt you, not loving money, not being anxious, not judging others, doing everything that we do for God in secret without any desire that other people should commend us or know about what we're doing.

And you know, all those things listed in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Poor in spirit, hungry and thirsting after righteousness, pure in heart. And that's tough. If you love me, keep my commandments.

And the immediate response from my heart is saying, I say, Lord, I want to, I love you. And if that is the mark of my love, I want to keep your commandments desperately. But I can't keep them.

I'll be honest. The flesh is too strong in me, even though I know scripture so much. And so, the Lord gives an answer to this unspoken question in the very next verse.

Don't worry. John 14, 16, I will ask the Father, and he will give you a helper. Wow.

He'll give me a helper? For what? For what he said in the previous verse, to keep the commandments. If you read that in the context, it doesn't mean anything else. If you love me, keep my commandments, and

I'll pray the Father, he'll give you a helper to keep my commandments, and he will be with you forever.

And right now, verse 17, the last part, this helper is only with you, outside of you. But in that day, on the day of Pentecost, he will be inside you. Did you notice that in verse 17? That little preposition makes all the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, with you and in you.

And then when from within, and we allow him to work from within, rivers of living water will flow from our innermost being. This is God's purpose, and rivers of living waters, you know what that speaks of? That speaks of service, of multitudes being blessed, everywhere. You shall be my witnesses under the outermost parts of the earth, and the Spirit flowing from within, sanctifying us, flowing out from within.

See, we cannot bless people, only God can bless people, but he uses us. We got to make sure that the channel is clear. That's the main thing, clean at all times.

This is God's will for us. Turn with me now to 2nd Corinthians, in chapter 3. 2nd Corinthians 3, in verse 18. In my study of the scriptures, in the last 55 years, I have found this to be the most complete statement of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In one verse, we with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, and in James 1 verse 22 to 25, we see the mirror is the law, God's word. So, when I look into the mirror, in the Old Testament law, the law was like a mirror that showed me my sin. Just like when I look into a mirror in the bathroom, I see the dirt on my face.

The law was like a mirror that showed me my sin. But now in the new covenant, when I look into the mirror, I see the glory of Jesus. That's amazing.

That's what I'm supposed to see when I read God's word. I'm not supposed to see my sin first. No, that's living under the law.

And a preacher who just tells you about your sin is really leading you back to the law. You say, what about my sin then? Hang on. As I see the glory of Jesus, I see my need.

When did Isaiah realize he was a man of unclean lips? You read in Isaiah chapter 6. He says, a day came when I saw the glory of the Lord. God didn't say anything. He just saw the glory of the Lord, and immediately Isaiah was smitten.

He said, woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips. That is how we need to be convicted of sin.

I tell people, you must never look inside to see if there's sin inside you. It'll bring you into bondage. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the glory of Jesus, and you'll see a lot more inside you than you've ever seen before.

But it won't discourage you. That's the difference, because you've seen the glory of the Lord first. You haven't been looking inside, searching for sins.

I didn't know all this. For years, I lived in bondage. My life, I don't know how many years, I lived discouraged.

I was a servant of the Lord, but I was frequently discouraged, frequently gloomy. I did not know how to obey one single command like 1 Thessalonians 5.18, In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. It's the only verse in the entire Bible where we are clearly said, this is God's will for

you.

You know, that's an area where so many Christians say, I'm trying to find out what God's will is. And I say, let's begin with the place where God has already told us what His will is. Before you discover what is God's will for you as to where you should live, and whom you should marry, and what job you should take, and which country you should go to, in everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

And I couldn't understand that. I'd be depressed by the things I saw inside me, till I saw that the Holy Spirit has come to show me the glory of Jesus in the Scriptures. So I'm not to search the Scriptures to produce a sermon.

I must confess that in my younger days, I studied the Scriptures to produce sermons. I saw that Jesus didn't study the Scriptures to produce sermons. His sermons came out of His heart, out of His life, out of what He had lived.

And so I said, Lord, I want to study the Scriptures for the purpose which You gave it, to show me the glory of Jesus Christ. And that made all the difference. The Holy Spirit has come to show me the glory of Jesus, and that can depress me when I see how unlike Him I am.

But He doesn't stop there. It says further on in 2 Corinthians 3.18, He will then change me into that likeness. I cannot change myself, but He will transform me.

So here's the double ministry of the Holy Spirit. To show me the glory of Jesus, through which I see my own need, and then to transform me into that likeness. Not in one day, but from glory to glory.

Just like Proverbs 4.18. The path of the righteous. Brighter and brighter and brighter. This is the Proverbs 4.18 of the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 3.18. From glory to glory to glory. This is the path that every single believer is supposed to walk. And if I'm ministering to others, like I have responsibility for many believers who are under my charge, and it is my duty to lead them into this life, where they can understand that they can go from glory to glory to glory to glory.

Otherwise, I'm not really serving the Lord. If I'm just preaching sermons to them, and impressing them with how much of the Bible I know, or perhaps instructing them in the various doctrines and theology and all, it's wonderful. But if they're not becoming more like Christ, it's not worth it.

I remember many years ago, I was invited to speak at a graduation ceremony of a Bible college in India. And the dean of that college said, Brother Zach, I want you to speak to these people so that they can hear what God can do through someone who's never been to a Bible college. So I went and spoke there, and I, you know, that they were distributing prizes also there that day for different students who had done well, who are finishing their final year.

And the person who got the first prize, one of those young men, came up to me after the meeting, he said, Brother Zach, I want to talk to you. I said, sure. And as I was talking to him, I asked him something.

I said, okay, you've understood a little bit about Hebrew and Greek and different, different aspects of theology and doctrine and all that. He said, let me ask you something. Have you got victory over dirty thoughts? I said, no.

I said, what's your spiritual state in your walk with the Lord after four years in this Bible school? He said, Brother Zach, it's actually worse than it was when I came. I said, you got first prize. You've talked in all these subjects here.

You know all the answers. Your mind is clear. You're going to be a pastor in some church.

What are you going to teach them? Hebrew and Greek and different aspects of theology. Those guys are struggling with sin in their life. You need to deliver them from that.

Jesus came to save his people from their sins, not to teach them theology. So I was anyway happy that I could share that with him and encourage him to go in the right way. But if he can be gripped by this.

Lord, this is the ultimate goal towards which you're working. When we think of the second coming of Christ, that's something that we really need to look forward to in our time. I was recently sharing with some folks who are disturbed about the trends that they see in the world today.

And they asked me what I thought about. And I said, well, these are the days of Noah and the days of Lot. That's what Jesus said.

The last days will be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot. And if you look in Genesis chapter six, there were two characteristics of Noah's time. Violence, which in today's terms would be filled with violence.

The earth was filled with violence. And in today's terms, we'd say that every day you'd be here hearing about somebody who is using his pistol and shooting people. That's violence.

Or you hear about suicide bombers and terrorism and all that. The last days will be like that. There's no point praying it won't happen.

It will happen. You can't say, Lord, don't let the last days be like the days of Noah. They will be.

The other thing that was characteristic of Noah's day was unnatural sex. We read there about the angels. The sons of God are referring to direct creations of God.

There were angels who wanted to have sex with the pretty women on earth. You read that in the first few verses of Genesis six. Now, angels don't have sexual ability.

And the only way they could do that was by possessing a man. In the Old Testament, there's no instance of demon possession. So demon possession was not clearly understood in the Old Testament like it is in the New Testament.

The first place in the Bible where you read about demon possession is in the New Testament. So if that were being written today, Genesis six, I think we'd read it like this. That the demons possessed a man because they wanted to have sex with some pretty woman.

It was an unnatural type of sex. What was the significant thing about Lot's time? You read that in Genesis 19. Two angels came in the form of men.

And I believe they were extremely good-looking. And the people in Sodom saw these two good-looking men going into Lot's house. Lot said, come into my house and stay here.

And they banged away at the door of Lot's house and said, bring those men out. We want to have sexual relations with those handsome men. And Lot says, please don't do that.

And he goes an amazing step further. It was amazing that a father would ever do that. How much, what a sense of hospitality he had to these strangers.

He said, here are my two virgin daughters. You read this in Genesis 19. Please take them.

He says, no, we don't want those women. We want these men. The last days will be like the days of Lot.

So when I hear about these things happening in the world around, I say, well, Christ is coming back soon, praise the Lord. It excites me. I'm not going to be able to make the world a better place.

Only Jesus can do that. And he'll do that when he establishes his kingdom here. I'm called to be a light in the darkness, to stand for the truth of God uncompromisingly, in all its brightness, proclaiming the entire, the whole counsel of God in the midst of a wicked world, which is going to get more and more wicked as time goes on.

So I'm not going to be disturbed when the world goes in a certain direction. My Lord has already told me it's going to go in that direction. But if the last days are going to be like the days of Noah and Lot with a lot of violence and a lot of unnatural sex, it also implies that there will be people like Noah in the last days.

That's the challenge that comes to me. A man who walked with God. The two people it says in the Old Testament who walked with God, Enoch in Genesis 5 and Noah in Genesis 6. A man who walked with God.

There will be people in the last days who walk with God like Noah. In 2nd Peter 2, Noah is called a preacher of righteousness. In the last days, there will be a few preachers of righteousness who will hold God's people to the highest standards of righteousness.

There are not many, but there will be a few. Noah was a man who had one passion to build the ark. Because he knew this is the only thing that's going to survive when the world is destroyed.

Others didn't believe it. There are going to be people like Noah in the last days whose one passion will be to build the church of Jesus Christ. The body of Jesus Christ.

To add people who are godly, who want to follow Jesus on earth before going to heaven. I don't want to find people who want to go to heaven. The whole world is full of people who want to go to heaven.

I'm looking for people who want to follow Jesus on earth before going to heaven. That number is very few. And Jesus said the way to life is narrow and very few find it.

Those are the ones I'm looking for. Who will be a bright shining light in the midst of this darkness. Noah was like that.

His passion was to build this church, this ark. And the other thing we see about Noah was, he was a man who brought up his family right. He had three sons.

All three followed him. That's another rare thing. Rare to find men who have children where all the children are following the Lord.

I remember when I started preaching and I got a family and I had four sons. And I said Lord if even one of them is not following you, I don't believe I'll be fit to preach according to the qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3. Every one of them must follow you. They don't have to have my ministry of preaching, that's a gift.

But they must be your disciples. I won't be satisfied with just their having said okay I'm born again, they go through baptism and I can get honor in the church. Oh brother Zach's children are baptized.

A lot of people seek for that honor to get their children baptized so that they get honor in the church. I'm not interested in that. I'm interested to see that they follow the Lord.

Because I see that Noah, his children, I believe his children cooperated in building the ark. And they worked with their dad in building the ark. And we want our children to work with us in building the church.

I'm not saying they should all be in full-time Christian work, but they should be cooperating in some way according to their own place in the body to build the church. And the other thing I see about Noah was he was a man who sacrificed. There will be people in the last days who will sacrifice to build the church.

Because imagine when the Lord told Noah you got to build a huge ship the first thing that would come to our mind is, Lord where's the money going to come from? Noah didn't ask that question because the Lord would have told him from your own pocket. Where else from? You can't get it from anywhere else. Nobody else believes in me in this world.

You got to sell some of your land. You got to cut down some of your trees. And build my ark.

Is it worth it? Serving the Lord at our own expense. There will be people in the last days like Noah who sacrifice and serve the Lord at personal cost. It won't be like the average run-of-the-mill Christian that you see nowadays.

The last days will be like the days of Noah in the world around. And the last days will be like the days of Noah in people like Noah on the earth. And the other thing about Noah, he was a godly father who in a wicked world, a world full of wickedness, selected good wives for his three sons.

He didn't let them just go and marry any odd girl they fell in love with. He taught them that they must marry godly girls. And that's why all of them were also in the ark.

And I believe those girls cooperated in building the ark as well. So that's the thing. I mean, if the world around can go the way of Noah and Lot, that's fine.

But our calling is to be like Noah. To be preachers of righteousness. To lead people to righteousness.

So that the Lord can have a people for his name. I want to turn now to 1 John and chapter 3. First of all, chapter 2 verse 28. We'll begin there.

Here it speaks about two types of people who are going to be there among believers when the Lord returns. 1 John 2, 28. Little children abide in him so that when he appears, here are the two categories.

Some will have confidence, boldness. Wow, Lord, you've come. And there'll be another group that shrinks away from him in shame at his coming.

Why should they shrink away? When Christ comes. Because there are things in their life they've not settled. They're not ready to meet the Lord.

We must always live in readiness to meet the Lord. Every single day we must live like that. I don't know when the Lord is going to come.

But I must live in readiness every single day. I see that the apostle Paul, he lived expecting the Lord to come in his lifetime. Do you know that? He said in 1 Thessalonians 5, we who are alive.

He doesn't say they who are alive or those who are alive. He says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, we who are alive will be caught up together with those who have died in Christ. Together we will meet the Lord.

So he's expecting himself to be alive. A few years later in 2 Timothy 4, the Lord shows him you're not going to be alive. The time of your departure has come.

Then he says, okay, the time of my departure has come and I'm not going to be alive when the Lord comes. So I'm ready to go. So what I say is this, in that like we sing in that song, it is well with my soul.

It is well, it is well with my soul. One line says, the sky, not the grave, is my goal. I'm 75 years old, but my goal is not the grave.

Even if I live to be 100, my sky will be my goal. I look forward to the coming of Christ. And I want to be ready.

I don't want to shrink away from him in shame when he comes. I want to have boldness. And he goes on to say in the next two, three verses, how we can have that boldness.

1 John 3 verse 1, see how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we are already called the children of God. That's already taken place. But for this reason, the world doesn't know us.

Now we are the children of God, verse 2, but it has not yet appeared what we are going to be. There are many things about that future state in our glorified body, which it says is not clear. Many things about that future state we can't explain.

But one thing we do know, that when Jesus comes, two things will happen, not one. Many people say when he comes, we shall see him. That's only one part of it.

We shall be like him. You know, the ultimate destination that God has, predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, God making all things work together for good, so that we can be conformed to the image of his Son. That's going to happen.

We shall be like him, and we shall see him as he is. So our hope is a dual hope, that I shall see Christ face to face, and I shall be like him. And how do I know that this is not just theory? That this is not just an empty theology I have in my head? There's only one way I can prove that.

Everyone, verse 3, who has this hope, which hope? Of becoming like him when he comes. Not just of seeing him. Everyone who has this dual hope of seeing him and becoming like him, what will he do? He will purify himself until he attains Christ's standard of purity.

You see how all these scriptures are pointing in one direction? How do I say I'm waiting for the coming of Christ? How do I say this is my living hope? I will purify myself. Again, how do I purify myself? Not sitting in a monastery. As long as I live, every day of my life, I want to serve the Lord.

I want to have every opportunity to lead people closer to Jesus Christ. Whether I'm sitting talking to somebody, whether I'm writing an email to someone, whether I'm speaking to someone on a cell phone, or speaking in a church, anywhere. I want every day of my life to lead someone closer to Christ, to become more like him, to build a church.

I will purify myself as he is pure. The fruit of my service will be my personal sanctification. It's a wonderful gospel, and to make it more practical, when I am sanctified, increasingly, as I said, it's not a sudden thing.

We are renewed day by day into the image of Christ. Like in the first chapter of Genesis, when the earth became corrupt. God could have, in a moment, completed the work, but he didn't do it in one moment.

Day by day by day, he renewed the earth until finally it was perfect. And that's a picture of how God renews us from our corruption day by day by day. If we submit like the earth did, till one day we shall be like Christ fully.

And to test myself so that I don't deceive myself. I read commands like, promises for example, like, sin will not rule over you, Romans 6 14. If you're really under grace and not under law, if you're really coming to this new covenant, one mark will be that sin will not rule over you.

You'll rule over sin. You may slip up, but it won't rule you. No sin is supposed to rule me in the new covenant.

In everything, I will give thanks. And I read commands like this. Let me just take a few examples from Philippians, just from one letter.

Rejoice in the Lord always, Philippians 4 4. Be anxious for nothing, Philippians 4 6. I've learned to be content, verse 11, in whatever circumstances I'm in. Rejoicing always, anxious for nothing. Content in whatever state I'm in, Philippians 2 14.

Doing everything without grumbling and disputing. I mean, that's just from two chapters in Philippians. These things will become increasingly real in my life.

That's the way I can check so that I don't fool myself that I'm becoming like Christ. It'll become real in my life, and the people in my home will notice it. If I'm a father or mother, my children will notice it.

If I'm a husband or wife, your partner will notice it. You work in an office or in a church or in a fellowship, people will notice it. There's a spirit of freedom from anxiety and complaining and murmuring and grumbling, and a spirit of thankfulness because we believe in a sovereign God who is in heaven.

In conclusion, I've always been challenged by this verse of the Apostle Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 2, verse 14. Thanks be to God who always, you know what always means 24-7, leads me in triumph in Christ. I said, Lord, I want that to be true in my life.

In the midst of everything I do for you, it's worthless if I'm not always led in triumph in my personal life. There was no man who served like the Apostle Paul. He's not talking about sitting in a monastery and trying to get victory over sin.

He served and served and served and served and served, risking his life, suffering, being beaten, imprisoned, and all that. But in the midst of all that, he got sanctification. He could rejoice always.

He could sit in a prison and say, be anxious for nothing. Philippians was written in a prison. He could sit in a prison and say, rejoice in the Lord always.

He could sit in a prison and say, no murmuring, no complaining. He could sit in a prison and say, I'm content in whatever state I'm in. Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph.

It's he who leads me in triumph. I remember when I first began to understand this glorious truth of the new covenant that sin need not rule over me. I used to say, finally, I discovered how to get victory over sin.

And the Lord said, don't say that. Say, Jesus keeps me from falling. Same message, but it's got a different tone about it when I say, I got victory.

He said, Jesus keeps me from falling. Sin is like the law of gravity. It's always pulling us down, even if it's a Bible, down, down, down.

But see right now, even though the law of gravity is trying to pull this little book down, it can't fall because there's another law, the law of life in my body keeps it from falling. This is New Testament victory. It's not this book getting victory over the law of gravity.

It's not me getting victory over sin. It's Jesus keeping me from falling. So that's why we need to point people to Jesus who not only saves us, but will keep us from falling.

Give me bow our heads for a moment of prayer. Search me, oh God. Show me if there's anything in my life that is making you sad.

Anything that makes you sad. Show it to me, Lord. I want to get rid of it.

I want to be all that you want me to be on this earth, in the short life that we have. Give every one of us grace for that. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

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