

The Full Gospel of the Glory of Christ

by Zac Poonen

The devil has blinded many Christians to the full gospel of the glory of Christ, giving them an old testament gospel instead, but God shines light into our hearts to give us the knowledge of the glory of God.

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Scripture: Genesis 1:3, Psalm 103:3-5, John 1:14, 1 Corinthians 13:11, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Galatians 3:24, 1 Timothy 6:10

Topics: "Glory Of Christ", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of moving beyond a self-centered, materialistic approach to faith and embracing the true gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ. It highlights the need to shift from seeking personal gain to desiring to serve God wholeheartedly, allowing the Holy Spirit to remove spiritual blindness and transform lives into the likeness of Christ.

Transcript

It's a hospital and even though now there may be many other good hospitals in India, 40-50 years ago this was the only really good hospital in India. And why was that? Many people who could not get cured, could not get a proper diagnosis elsewhere would come here. And here because of the expertise of the doctors and the equipment they had, they could diagnose the disease properly.

And once the disease was diagnosed properly, that is very, very important first step. And then the second step was to cure it with medicine or surgery. And we know that in every sickness, these are the two important things.

A good doctor is one who can diagnose the sickness accurately. And give the correct treatment or surgery to cure it without causing other complications. You know, to give the minimum amount of medicine required.

Now the same thing is true spiritually. Sin is like sickness. And all the problems man has is caused by sin.

And a true servant of God is to be like a good doctor. He must be able to diagnose the problem accurately. And give the correct cure without causing other complications.

See, we have problems in our personal life. Most of the homes in India are unhappy homes. It's not only those homes where the women are killed for dowry.

There are many other homes where the husband doesn't kill the wife. But they are totally unhappy. And then we have a whole lot of institutions called churches in India.

And there also there is such a lot of corruption. In all denominations and organizations. There are financial scandals.

There is moral impurity. So, in personal life, home life, church life, there is sickness. Spiritual sickness.

And why is it with all the thousands of preachers and television preachers and everything else in this country, these sicknesses are not being cured? Why is it we don't have more godly people who are walking as Jesus walked? Why is it we don't have more homes that are like a light to the world? Why don't we have more churches that are like a light to the world? Why don't we have more preachers who have the humility of Jesus Christ? Why don't we have more preachers who have the attitude to money that Jesus had? Why is it that so many of us believers can look at all this and accept it, not wishing for something better? You know, in India, when we go into the villages and even in the towns, there are so many slums that are so dirty. And the people who live in those slums have got so used to unhygienic, dirty conditions that they accept it. And the next generation in that slum will live in that same slum.

They have got used to it. Except maybe one or two who will try to climb out and get into a better life and live in better surroundings. And I think it's the same with many Christians in India.

Spiritually speaking, a lot of us are living in a slum. If you have sin in your thought life, it's a slum. If you are fighting and quarreling in your home, even if it's a five bedroom house, it's a slum.

And even if you have a grand church building, but not the mighty prophetic word of God, that's a slum. The people in the church are not becoming more and more godly. It's a slum.

What is the reason for all this? That's what we want to think about during this weekend. So I want to begin first of all in Genesis chapter 1. The bible begins with these words spoken by God. Do you know what were the first words spoken by God in the bible? Do you know what were the first words spoken by God in the bible? The first words spoken by God were, let there be light, verse 3 of Genesis 1. Let me repeat that.

The first words spoken by God in the bible were, let there be light. And then after that, what was the first thing that God did? It says in verse 4, He separated the light from the darkness. Please remember this all your life.

The first words God spoke were, let there be light. And the first thing that God did after that was to separate the light from the darkness. Now in this, there is a spiritual meaning.

He called the light day and the darkness night. These two were to be separate. There was never supposed to be any fellowship between the two.

Now the meaning of this we read in the new testament. In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, the bible interprets itself. What is this darkness? The darkness is described in verse 4 of 2 Corinthians 4. Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

You know a blind man lives in darkness. If you close your eyes, you know what darkness is. That is blindness.

That means we can't see. And if a man is blind, he doesn't know the color of the wall or the color of the table or anything. You can't blame him.

You feel sorry for him. Now, the bible says that the devil has blinded the minds of people and made their eyes dark. That is the darkness mentioned in Genesis 1. It says their darkness was over the face of the earth in Genesis 1 too.

The meaning is here. That means I don't see fully the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ. I may see a little bit of it.

For example, all those here who have received forgiveness of sins through the Lord Jesus Christ, you have seen a little bit of that glory. I would say about 1%. But that 1%, you think it is the full gospel.

That is where the devil has succeeded. But making you think that 1% of the gospel is the full gospel, forgiveness of sins is a very important part of the gospel. But that is not the full gospel of the glory of Christ.

No, it is only 1%. So, the devil has robbed most Christians of the remaining 99%. It is something like this.

Supposing your father was a multi-millionaire and you are his child. And he has got properties in Chennai, Vellore, Coimbatore and all over the place. He has many bank accounts with a lot of money.

And before he dies, he writes a will in your favour. Willing all this property for you. And then you don't understand it properly.

You give it to some lawyer to get this for you. Or you don't read it properly. Or you are careless about it and you ask some lawyer to interpret the will for you.

And that crooked lawyer cheats you of 99% of your property. And you get only 1% of your father's property. And you live in a small little hut somewhere in Vellore, which is part of your father's property.

And you are very happy that you have got a roof over your head. And you are struggling to live. That is the picture of many Christians.

They have got something from God. They have received the forgiveness of their sins through the death of Jesus Christ. And they are happy.

But go back to that illustration of your father leaving the inheritance for you. I don't think there is one person sitting here, even if you are uneducated, who will allow any crooked lawyer to cheat you of your father's inheritance. Because when it comes to money and material things, we are all very clever.

We don't let anybody cheat us even of 10 rupees. But the devil is cheating us left, right and center of something much more than millions of rupees. What does it say here? That the God of this world has blinded the minds of people from the gospel of the forgiveness of sins? No.

He does blind many people in the world from the gospel even of the forgiveness of sins. Millions. They haven't even got the one percent.

But the devil has succeeded in blinding the minds of many believers from the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ. That is what it says here. The gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

What is that remaining 99 percent? That after our sins are forgiven, this image of God that is in Christ, which is His glory, can become ours. That I can be changed into that likeness. Not in a day.

Not in a day or one week. But progressively. You know, just like you send your little child to school when he is three years old.

He doesn't become a PhD in one year. No. He doesn't become a post graduate surgeon in one year.

But how many of you will be happy if he just learned to read and write in the kindergarten? Reading, writing is very important. But you are not happy with your child just learning to read and write. And do you think God is happy with His children who have just got forgiveness of sins? That is the kindergarten lesson.

God wants us to go from one degree of glory to another. See chapter 3 verse 18. It says as we look into the mirror of God's word, we see the glory of Jesus there.

We see the gospel of the glory of Jesus there. And as we see the glory of Jesus in the word of God, it says the Holy Spirit changes us from one degree of glory to another into that same likeness. Nobody could experience this in the old testament.

I mean they could experience forgiveness of sins in the old testament. They could experience healing from diseases in the old testament. They could experience material prosperity in the old testament.

They could experience the defeat of their enemies in the old testament. But they could not become more and more like Jesus Christ in the old testament. Have you understood now what the gospel of the glory of Christ is? And the devil has cheated most believers of it by giving them an old testament gospel.

The old testament was a kindergarten class. Galatians 3 says that the old testament they were like children. In the new testament we are like grown up sons.

Children are occupied with kindergarten stuff. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, when I was a child, I thought like a child. I spoke like a child.

I did everything like a child. But now that I am grown up, I think like a man. I speak like a man.

I do things like a man. That is the difference between old covenant and new covenant. God treated people in the old covenant like little babies.

You read Galatians 3 and chapter 4, those two chapters and you will understand that. But now God wants us to be like sons. We need to understand things that little babies cannot understand.

Let me show you Psalm 103. Psalm 103, this was written 1000 years before Christ by David. And it is an old testament gospel.

What did this old testament gospel give David? He says, bless the Lord oh my soul verse 2 and don't forget any of his benefits. This is a very common prayer of many people in Tamil Nadu. Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not all of his benefits.

Okay, what are the benefits that he got 1000 years before Christ? Number one, God forgave verse 3 all his sins. Not 99%, pardon all his sins. Have you got pardon of all your sins? Praise the Lord.

David had it 1000 years before Christ. If you only got that much, you are not better than David. Secondly, he heals all your diseases.

You believe in Jesus as a healer? And you think you got the full gospel just because of that? Some of you believe in Jesus as your healer but you are still sick. David never knew Jesus as a healer. He didn't know about Jesus at all.

But he knew God as the one who healed all his diseases. Even that is Psalm 103, old testament kindergarten gospel. Third, he redeems verse 4, your life from the pit, that is he saves you from hell.

Have you been saved from hell? David also, he is in heaven today. That is an old testament kindergarten gospel. Further, number 4, he satisfies all your life, all your years with many good things in this world.

Food, money, property, so many things. Are you blessed with many material things? That is an old testament kindergarten gospel that David experienced. Ok, let me tell you these 4 things again.

When a preacher tells you, Jesus can forgive your sins, Jesus can heal your diseases, Jesus can save you from hell, Jesus can bless you with many material things. He is preaching Psalm 103, not the gospel of the glory of Jesus. That devil has cheated believers today.

Giving them an old testament gospel and saying, that is everything, you got it. Brother, that is 1% of the gospel. It's what David had a thousand years before Christ.

Why have you allowed the devil to blind your eyes so that you don't see the rest of it written in the new testament? How many preachers there are today on television, platforms, telling people these 4 things? And of course, there are so many believers who like to hear these 4 things. Jesus can be forgiven, my diseases can be healed, I won't go to hell, and I will have so many material prosperity on this earth. And the devil knows people like these things.

And so he gives them this gospel and blinds them to the remaining 99%. That's not the new testament gospel. New testament gospel is far glorious than that.

It's called the gospel of the glory, what did we read in 2 Corinthians 4, the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. And that is called the light. What is the light? The light is the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ who is the image of God.

Now when Jesus was on earth, what was his glory? It's called the glory of Christ. His glory was not that he lived in a 5 bedroom house. His glory was not that he had a chariot driven by 8 horses.

His glory was not even that he could do miracles. What was his glory? He did manifest a little bit of his glory doing miracles. You know when he turned the water into wine, it says he manifested a little bit of his glory there.

But when the apostle John describes the life of Jesus and the glory of Jesus, his whole life, see how he describes it in John 1. In John 1 verse 14, he says the word became flesh. No one has seen God at any time. That is also written in verse 18.

No one has seen God at any time. But Jesus came and explained him. Why is Jesus called the word? If I have thoughts in my mind, you don't know what those thoughts are until I speak them in words.

Now I have been standing here for the last half an hour and if I just stood here and had all types of nice thoughts, you wouldn't know anything about what I wanted to say. But because those thoughts became words in the last half an hour, you have understood my thoughts. Otherwise you can't see my thoughts.

And no one can see God. But Jesus became the expression of God on earth and that is why he is called the word. And not just spoken words like in the old testament, when Moses spoke the word of God, that was also the word of God.

And there are many things, three quarters of the bible is the word of God. Old testament is three quarters of your bible. But Jesus, in Jesus that word became flesh.

It wasn't just spoken. It was manifested in a human body. The word of God was manifested in the way a man lived every second of the day.

It was not just spoken. It was not just a message given on the sabbath in the synagogue. That was the old testament method.

But in Jesus the word became flesh. He didn't just preach, love your enemies. That word became flesh.

He loved his enemies. Those who killed him, he said, father forgive them. They don't know what they are doing.

Everything he spoke was manifested in his life. The word was made flesh. Then it says in John 1.14, the word became flesh and dwelt in our midst.

Otherwise we would not have been able to see anything. He had to dwell in our midst in all the difficult circumstances of life. If you want to understand what a miracle that is, it's like you are trying to live a clean, pure, hygienic life in the midst of the dirtiest slum in Vellore.

To live a clean, hygienic life in some five star hotel, that is easy. But to live a clean, hygienic life in a dirty slum, that's a little more difficult. This world is so full of sin.

Everyday people speaking sinful things, thinking sinful things, doing sinful things, having sinful attitudes to one another. If you were to look at this world from heaven, you would see it as a stinking slum of sin. Movie theatres are full of sin.

Television is full of sin. Internet has got so many sinful websites. If you could look at this earth from heaven, it is a stinking mess, a slum of sin.

In the midst of this slum, one man walked pure. The word was made flesh. No sin could come into him.

The word was made flesh and dwelt right in our slum. And there we beheld his glory, it says. That glory was the same glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

And it is described, not in the miracles he did, but in a life full of grace and truth. Because we can say truth means it was full of purity and holiness. And grace means it was full of love and compassion and mercy.

It was not just holiness, it was also fullness of love. It was not only total purity, it was also total compassion on poor people. Some people are very strong on holiness, but they have no compassion.

Some people have a lot of compassion for poor, but they are not pure according to God's standards. But in the glory of Jesus was seen in this perfect balance of these two. You know, grace and truth are like flesh and bones in our body.

If we were only bones, that would be scary. If we were only flesh, we would just collapse, we wouldn't be able to stand even. We have bones and flesh.

That's how Jesus was. Full of truth, but not just truth. He was not a skeleton.

It was covered with tremendous love. That is described as the glory of Jesus Christ here. Now we turn to 2 Corinthians 4.4 and say, this is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is in the image of God.

And we saw in chapter 3 verse 18 that the Holy Spirit wants to change us into that likeness. That means, like Jesus lived on earth, I can also live. I can partake of His humility.

I can't produce it, but I can partake of it. I can't produce this electricity, but I can get it and benefit from it in this room. So, I can't produce this holiness, but like that electricity, I can get this from God and become holy.

I can't love my enemies, but I can get that love from God and love all my enemies. This is the gospel. Have you experienced it? I cannot free myself from the love of money and material things.

99.9% of believers who say they are saved, they are saved from hell, but they are not saved from the love of money. They love money and material things totally. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6.10, the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil.

So, no wonder you have so much fighting among believers and among husband and wife. Many of you are husband and wife. You ask yourself, what do you fight about at home? How many of you fight about biblical doctrines? Hardly anybody.

No, no, no. You are fighting about some saree or shirt or food or clothing or something. All earthly things.

It's because we love earthly things so much. You are saved from hell, but you are not saved from the love of earthly things. Because the devil has blinded our eyes to the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ.

So, what is the solution? Turn to 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6. God who said light must shine out of darkness is now shone into our hearts to give us this light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6. God who said light must shine out of darkness is now shone into our hearts to give us this light of the glory of God in the face of Christ. That is the interpretation of what we read in Genesis chapter 1. What is the darkness? Darkness is the selfish, proud light we have inherited from Adam.

The two characteristics of the devil are selfishness and pride. And he put that poison into Adam and Eve. And we have all descended from Adam and Eve.

And just like we carry physical characteristics of our earthly parents, we have all inherited from Adam selfishness and pride. Our life is centered around ourselves. We always think what I can get, what I can get, what I can get.

That's how every business man here lives. Think of somebody who starts a new business here. Some new business.

What is he starting it for? You think he is starting it for your benefit? No. Not at all. Not at all.

Whether it's a jewelry shop or a vegetable shop, he fools you to say this is to serve you. He is serving himself. Every business man starts something for his own benefit.

In Karnataka we have so many medical colleges, engineering colleges started by people. What do they say? This is to serve the needy people of India. All rubbish.

It is to make money. That's all. So every politician, they come at voting time and say we want to serve the people, we want to help you.

And when they become politicians, in one year their assets go from 1 lakh to 10 crores. You think it is to serve you? Everybody in the world is serving themselves. Politicians, business men.

What about the preachers? They are supposed to be better, right? We are here to serve God's people. Then why do they pass the bag around after that to collect money from people? It's all a deception. We got it from Adam.

Think of myself. So if a preacher wants to get a big crowd in his church, he must preach a gospel which will satisfy the self-centered nature of Adam. So he must preach like this.

If you come to Jesus, he will do this for you. He will do that for you. He will do the other thing for you.

You will get a better car. You will get a better job. You will get forgiveness of sins.

You will go to heaven. Your sickness will be healed. Who doesn't want all that? Coming to Jesus, I will get all this.

Give me, I will sign the decision card. That's wonderful. And do I have to give some money? Yeah, you give some money, God will give you 100 times back.

Every Marwadi will definitely give their money to this bank which gives 100 times. Most banks will give 6-7% interest. But here the bank has given me 100 times what I give.

What a fantastic blindness the devil has put upon people. Do you know what the real gospel Jesus preached? He said if you come to me, he didn't say I will give you money. He didn't even say I will give you healing.

He says you will have to deny yourself. You will have to take up the cross everyday and die to yourself. And he said if you follow me, you will be hated by people in the world.

You will be persecuted. Some of you will be killed. So he was inviting people, not come and get money, but come and die.

Where have you heard a preacher say that? I preached it for 30 years. That's the only gospel there is. But it's not just death.

The bible says if we die with him, we will live with him. He says give me your rotten Adamic life, I will give you a better heavenly life. You may not get much money, but you will get a better life.

Now initially, we all come to the Lord with some selfish desire. People come to Jesus to escape hell. They turn to the Lord when their business crashes.

Or they get sick and they turn to the Lord. There are many reasons why people come to Jesus. Even in the gospels.

And the good news is that the Lord accepts you even when you come with those selfish reasons. We have a verse here. Come let us return to the Lord.

And there you have a picture of the prodigal son going back to his home and the father welcoming him. Now why did that prodigal son go back home? Did he feel one day, I have dishonored my father so much? No. Not at all.

He said I am hungry. I am not getting enough food. I am eating what the pigs are eating.

In my father's home, even the servants are getting better food than this. No. Let me go back.

What for? Not because I dishonored my father. But I am hungry. He went for his own need.

Remember that. Jesus said that story. He went back because he felt a need.

Did the father receive him? Did the father say, hey you have come back just because you are hungry is it? Jesus said the father ran and embraced him. What do we learn from that? Even when you come to God with a selfish reason, he welcomes you. Did you come because you wanted to escape hell? God says come, I am so happy you came.

Did you come because you were sick and wanted healing? The Lord says come, I will heal you. Did you come because your business crashed and you wanted some money? The Lord says come. You came for your own need.

God welcomes you. That's ok. We begin our life like that.

But after he had stayed in the father's house for one year, he sees the goodness of the father. This fellow has wasted all the father's property. Dishonored the father's name.

And he sees his father is so forgiving, so good, so kind. After one year of seeing that, you go and ask him, why are you still staying in the father's house? Because I like the food. You would say what a wretched, ungrateful fellow.

What do you want from your father? I want a little more of his money. You have already taken half of it and wasted it. No, he has got more.

I want to get some more from him. What would you think of that boy? What would you think if your son was like that? He wasted half your property. He came back, you welcomed him.

And he spends one year in your house and sees all your goodness. And he comes and asks you, daddy have you written my name in your will that I will get some of the money from your property? You would feel so unhappy. After all that I have forgiven my son, he is still like this.

But I don't think he would have been like that. He would have said, I don't deserve anything from father. I just want to spend all my life serving you.

I don't want any payment. I don't want any reward. I just want to please you.

Have you said that to Jesus? You came initially for some personal need. But most of you have been more than one year in the father's house. Have you been delivered from your self-centered life? Where you only think in terms of getting, getting, getting from God.

You know, I find among Christians, we can divide people into two. All the people sitting here. Yes, after your sins are forgiven and you are born again.

After that, you are still divided into two. One group says, what is the maximum I can get from God for myself in my earthly things before I die? And there are many preachers to feed that lust of yours. And they have spiritual language.

Brother, have faith. Have faith for a bigger house. Have faith for a bigger car or a better job.

Have faith for more healing. Their whole life is centered on what material things, earthly things can I get from this God. And that's one group.

That's a huge group. And then there is a very small number, whose attitude is not what is the maximum I can get from God. But what is the maximum God can get from me in my one earthly life? My life, my time, my money, my energy.

Those are the spiritual Christians. The others are born again, but the Bible calls them carnal. You say, brother Zach, you don't believe in claiming things from God? Yes.

I have asked God for many things. I used to be a slave to anger. I used to be angry with my wife, angry with other people.

And I said, Lord, I have faith that you can free me from my anger. I got it. I used to be discouraged, depressed, complaining, murmuring.

I want to have faith that I will be completely free from all murmuring and grumbling. I want to be free from all discouragement and bad moods. I want to claim this from God by faith.

I never asked God for cheap things like houses and cars. I know that will all perish with this earth. I asked God for the real riches, like patience and joy, victory over all sin.

Lord, I have faith that you will deliver me from every dirty, lustful thought in my mind. Oh, the devil has fooled you. Instead of these real riches, you are satisfied with these little toys.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord is telling all of you, my son, my daughter, I have an inheritance for you. Don't be fooled by all the preachers who have kept you down on an earthly level. Don't be fooled by all the preachers who have kept you down on an earthly level.

Come up higher and live that heavenly minded life on this earth that Jesus lived. Do you think you can live like that? I am sure that boy who came back to his father's house, he never wanted anything from his father after that. He only said, Dad, how can I help you and serve you in your business? I don't want any salary, I don't want any money.

Give me the privilege of serving you the rest of my life. Are you like that? Some of you have been in the father's house 15-20 years and you are still asking the father, give me this and give me that and some more money and some more this. When will you finish with your selfish, self-centered life? When will you allow the Holy Spirit to remove the blindness from your eyes? When will you allow the Holy Spirit to remove the blindness from your eyes? You have come to the Lord for forgiveness.

Let us come and return to the Lord to be freed from our self-centered life. That is the message of the gospel. I can testify from many years of my own experience.

I never experienced this for the early years, 16 years of my Christian life. But I battled through and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I began to understand that the devil had cheated me. And I said, Satan, you are not going to cheat me of my inheritance.

I want to share that gospel with you. My dear brothers and sisters, I am not preaching this for money. I don't preach for money at all.

Like the Apostle Paul, I support myself with my own business. I don't take any money for preaching the gospel. Why am I sharing the gospel? That is why in all our meetings, we never take a collection.

I have not done it in 35 years. Nowhere in the world. Because we want to show people that gospel is free.

The third rate, useless, earthly gospel, they sell it for money. But the real gospel of the glory of Christ is absolutely free. That is the way you know it is from God.

The devil is always stealing. Man is always selling. God is always giving things free.

That is the difference between God, man and the devil. The gospel of God is free. You can have it.

Let's pray. While our heads are bowed in prayer, I want to invite you to respond to the gospel you heard. I invite you to come back tomorrow and the afternoon to hear some more.

Heavenly Father, I pray that you will sow a seed in people's hearts this evening. Deliver many from this self-centered, wretched life. We can see the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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