

The Importance Of Giving Thanks To God Always

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the concept of eternal life, clarifying that eternal life is not just living forever but having the life of God within us. It highlights the importance of understanding that eternal life means having a beginning and no end, which only God possesses. The speaker encourages gratitude and thankfulness, pointing out that eternal life is about knowing God and Jesus Christ intimately, walking in faith and love, and trusting in God's faithfulness even in difficult situations.

Scripture: John 3:16, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, John 14:1, Matthew 11:28, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 10:13

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Intimacy with God"

Description

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Transcript

I want to speak about eternal life, something unheard of in the Old Testament and something unheard of among all the religions of the world and even something unknown by most Christians. The most popular verse in the Bible among Christians is John 3.16. Many people know it by heart, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting or eternal life. But for many, many years I did not know what eternal life was.

I thought, like probably many of you sitting here, that it is living forever. But that is not the meaning of eternal life, because people who go to hell live forever. They don't have eternal life.

Eternal means not never ending. Eternal means it never had a beginning and no ending. So only some, that person has eternal life who had no beginning and no end and that is only Almighty God.

So eternal life is another expression for the life of God. So if you say you have eternal life, it means not that you live forever, but that you got something of the life of God in you. Understand that.

And God wants you to have it. That's the wonderful thing. See the world is such selfish, possessive type of world with people who say, I want to keep what I have for myself.

Most people in the world don't want to share anything they have with others. They may give the leftovers and things that they don't need, but when God gave us eternal life, it's not what he didn't need. See, human nature is such, even our generosity to others is what I don't need, I'll give to others.

I mean, there are very few people who have come to experience the way God didn't give when he gave his son, he didn't give what he did not need. He gave himself. He gave everything.

And that is the life of God. That's eternal life. And very, very few people have come into that type of life.

And that is the reason why they are frequently depressed, discouraged, fight for earthly things. I believe that Jesus was never depressed, never discouraged. He never fought with anybody for earthly things.

Is this the Jesus you know? That's not the Jesus I knew for many years. You know, when I was born again, I was from some dead denominational church. I did not know Jesus, but one day I accepted him.

And I went to a church way back when I was 19 and a half years old. That's 65 years ago, nearly. And many of those people were good people.

They preached that Christ died for our sins. I'll tell you honestly, among all the preachers who are 20, 30 years older than me, they knew a lot about the Bible. But as I look back, I can't say that any of them knew God.

They didn't come across to me as people who were very intimate with the ruler of this universe, with Almighty God. Because there's something, you know, if you're with God frequently, it'll reflect in your nature, it'll reflect in your conversation. I've seen some brothers, much older brothers, it is reflected in their face that there's a radiance of having been in the presence of God.

There'll be a calmness in their life. There won't be panic and turmoil. Even when things go wrong, there'll be a relaxed trust in God.

Dear brothers and sisters, do you want that type of life? That is eternal life. And that is the life not only Jesus came to give us, but he died in order to give it to us. Can you imagine? Someone who's so eager that we should have this eternal life, that he's even willing to die to give it to us.

If that's the only way you can get it, okay, I'm willing to die. It's absolutely amazing. The more and more I meditate on Jesus, I'm just amazed.

You know, our whole Christian life should be getting to know Jesus better and better and better. Not getting to know the Bible better and better, which is good, but the Bible must be a means by which we come to know Jesus. I have personally met in some other churches where I was in my younger days, people who really knew the Bible.

They could quote verses by heart, but they did not know God. I did not feel that they knew God. They were so stern and proud, and I felt they were, as I know the Lord now, I feel those people were a million miles away from God, but they thought they knew God.

They spoke powerfully and gathered groups and all that. And I'm glad I could see through them. I was much younger than them, but I said, this is not the real thing.

And I remember in those younger days, once in a while, I would meet a man with a radiance about him, and not necessarily from the church I was in. Maybe in some church I despised, like an Anglican church. An Anglican church, can anybody know the Lord? And I met some people there who, boy, there was something about them till today.

I don't remember his name, but I can remember that I met such people 55 years ago. I don't forget. There was a man who knew God, not by any powerful sermon he preached.

It was a personal conversation with him. I felt this man knows God. Dear brothers and sisters, let me request you and urge you, let this be the passion of your heart, to know him.

Jesus said in John 17, the only definition of eternal life is what Jesus himself gave in John 17 and verse 3. And I've said this before. I need to say it again, because I find you need to say it again and again and again and again before people really get gripped by it. I find that teaching the Bible and teaching these truths or teaching about God is something like a little more difficult than teaching people addition or subtraction and multiplication in school.

Nobody learns long division, for example, dividing a big number by another big number. Nobody learns it in one day. How does the teacher teach dividing a big number by another big number in school? Again and again and again and repeat and they give them exercises, go and do this homework, and they get it wrong a hundred times, and then they learn it.

And they learn it permanently. I mean, the long division I learned in school in more than 70 years ago nearly, I remember today because it was drilled into my head by frequent repetition and homework. But if they had just taught it once, I would not have learned it.

I would not have learned many other things, how to find square root or something. So many things we learn by frequent, not only by somebody teaching it again and again and again, but homework. All good schools give children homework.

They go home and they have to do those problems and they learn. Sometimes they make mistakes and the teacher corrects it, they learn. If we go to, we get to know the Word of God and like that, we make tremendous progress in our Christian life.

I wish all of you would take what you hear in the church here, particularly a word that goes to your heart, a prophetic word. There are not many who have the gift of prophecy, but when you hear one, take it seriously. Do some homework so that it remains with you, so that you don't forget it, so that you don't lose it, some precious treasure that God gave.

You see, not every word that we hear or read in any articles or books or even on the YouTube and all those hundreds and thousands of messages there, not all of them are words that come from the throne of God. They're correct. Teaching is correct, but there are very few messages that have an anointing about it, and it's the anointed word that really brings life.

The rest is information, which goes to the head. And, you know, in the early days of the Christian life, we think, because I've understood in my head, I understood it. No, you haven't.

It takes a long time for that word to sink down into the heart, then we are gripped. And that's made all the difference in my life as I have pursued eternal life. John 17:3, this is eternal life.

Clear definition. He's praying to the Father. Jesus is praying to the Father at the Last Supper.

He's just washed the people's feet, they have broken bread, and now He's telling them in John 14, 15, 16, a long message, and at the end of that message, He prays. You know, we are commonly used to hearing, if you ask somebody, what is the Lord's Prayer? The common understanding in Christianity is the Lord's Prayer is, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, and so on. That is not the Lord's Prayer.

That is the prayer He taught us to pray. The Lord's Prayer is in John 17. This is the Lord's Prayer, which He prayed.

It says, He had these things He spoke, and then He lifted up His eyes to only pray. This is the only place in the Gospels where you see a long prayer that Jesus prayed to the Father, the Lord's Prayer. And in that prayer, He's not giving information to God.

He's not asking God for things. He is asking God for some things, the Father. But some things are for our benefit to know.

For example, verse 2, You gave Father, You gave me authority over all flesh. Authority for what? To give eternal life to all whom You have given them. Why is this prayer described here, mentioned in full? If all prayer is private between me and God, then there's no need to publish it.

There are some prayers that are private. All of us pray certain prayers we don't want anybody else to hear, just between me and God. And Jesus spent many hours in prayer in private, and no record of what He prayed there.

That was purely private between Him and the Father. But this prayer is not private. It's like praying in public.

When we pray in public, we want other people also to hear what we are praying. And if you go slowly through John 17, a lot of it is information for me. But He's praying to the Father.

He's saying, You gave Him authority over all flesh that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And I learned something there. What do I learn from the verse 2? That the Father gave me to Jesus.

Have you ever thought of that? That the Father looked out over the world and picked you up and gave you to Jesus as His younger brother or younger sister? That blesses my heart. It blesses my heart that the Father looked out over the world and looked out over thousands of years in the future, and saw me, a little baby being born, and picked me up and said, I'm giving Him to Jesus. He said that about you.

You are not an insignificant number in the world. You're not an insignificant unknown person, as far as God is concerned. You have great value before God's eyes.

My dear brother, if you're born again, if you've asked Jesus to come into your heart, even if you ask Jesus to come in your heart this morning, I want you to know one thing, and I hope you'll never forget it, that you are a very important person in God's eyes. People in the church may not recognize you as important. It doesn't matter.

Because in the church, people recognize those who are very gifted, or those who make themselves prominent, or those who are very frequently in public. But God doesn't go by those things. Let me turn to a little passage to show you how God looks at things.

Turn to Hebrews in chapter 8. There are little, little things that we must notice in Scripture. Hebrews 8, the promise is, you know, in the Old Testament, Hebrews 8, 11, it's one of the blessings of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is described in verses 10 to 12, the three blessings of the New Covenant.

And that whole section from verse 7 to 13 is about the New Covenant. And one of the blessings of the New Covenant is, unlike the Old Covenant, where Moses got up to teach, and Ezra was a great teacher, he said, they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, know the Lord. Then you say, well, Brother Zech, then what are you sitting up here and doing? I'm not teaching you to know the Lord.

I can't do that. I'm teaching the Bible. And there's, God has appointed teachers to teach the Scriptures.

But to know the Lord, I can't teach you that. The Holy Spirit will make you know the Lord personally. It's like an older brother in a family, supposing there's a family, and an older brother is looking at his three-year-old younger brother or sister.

He can teach him many things. He can teach him arithmetic. He can teach him to add.

He can teach him to read. He can teach him so many things in the world. But he can't teach him to know his father.

That little three-year-old has got to know his father himself. The father picks him up and hugs him, and he goes and sits on the father's lap. That's how he knows the father.

The elder brother cannot teach him that. So I can teach you certain doctrines when I sit here, but I can't teach you to know the father. If you go to God your father and let him hug you and make you sit on his lap, he'll do that.

I like it. I like it when I'm sitting on God's lap and talking to him. If you're a clever person, you think you're a very important person, you cannot know that.

It's only those who come like, Lord, I'm like a two-year-old. I want to sit on your lap and look at you and talk to you and may not understand many things, but just know that you love me and you care for me. That's changed my life.

That's what's made my life so happy. That's what's removed discouragement and gloom from my life. So many years of my Christian life, I was discouraged and defeated because I thought it's because I didn't know the scriptures.

I didn't know some little secret of victory over sin that is hidden somewhere in the Bible. I did not know. No, it's not all that.

I did not know how to sit like a little two-year-old in the father's lap and look up to him and love him and say, thank you for loving me. That's eternal life, to know the father. And that'll bring victory over sin more than all the doctrines and all that.

And it's a million times more blessed than speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is valuable. If you sit on the father's lap like a two-year-old, I do that too.

Because I say, father, I don't know what to say now. Thank you. You've given me a language by which I can communicate to you.

I don't understand it, but I can speak to you in that unknown language and be blessed by it, though I don't even know what I'm saying. But just that fellowship, just to be with the father, it's a wonderful thing. It's really a wonderful thing.

All shall know me. And this is the part I wanted you to see. In the world, always it's the greatest to the least, but here is the least to the greatest.

That's what I wanted you to notice. So the father gives preference to the least. Who's the least person sitting here in this church? It's certainly not me.

I'm perhaps the most important person sitting here today. I'm at the other end. I'm one of the greatest.

The father begins here with the least, not with me. I'm last in the line. I believe that.

I'm last in the line. The father is busy with someone who recognizes I am the least. And if I, even though I've known the Lord for 64 years, if I say, Lord, I'm one of the least, I recognize myself as one of the least among your children.

Knowledge and Bible knowledge and gift and planting churches, these things don't make the person great in God's eyes. No, no, no, no. What makes a person great in God's eyes is if he can love, L-O-V-E.

If he can love Jesus supremely, sincerely say from his heart, Lord Jesus, I'm not a great Bible scholar, but I love you. And I want to tell you, I love you more than anything in this world because you gave your life for me. And I'm looking forward to spending eternity with you.

And nothing on this earth attracts me anymore. The only reason I'm living on the earth is so that I can tell others about your love. That's all.

There's nothing on this earth I want. I just want to share your love and how good you've been to me so that others also can be drawn to you, be with you. That's the only reason.

I'm not living on earth to make money. I'm not living on earth to become famous. I'm just living on earth to tell somebody about your love and what a good God you are.

Because there are so many people in other religions portraying such a horrible picture of God as God is such a tyrant. You see some of these idols, scary. You know, they're really scary.

Oh, they are so mighty with so many hands and all. You don't want to go anywhere near them. I say, oh God, I want to live on this earth and show that that's not you.

I don't want to criticize anyone, any religion, because they are blind. I mean, if I see a blind man in the road stumbling over something, I don't criticize him. No, I try to help him.

He shoves me off saying, I don't want your help. Okay, but I like to help him. And when I look at people with other religions, I tell you, I do not despise them.

But I see they are blind. They don't know God. They don't know God the way I know Him.

And God is perfect love. Everything he does and everything he commands is out of love. For example, something that men find very difficult to give up, lusting with the eyes, not watching pornography.

Why does God say it? Every time you do it, it's destroying you. It's like taking a blade and cutting yourself. And the father says, don't do it.

Don't do it, my son. You're hurting yourself. You think you're enjoying it, watching that pornography.

You're taking a blade and cutting yourself. And the father says, throw away that blade. It's so difficult to throw it away.

And the devil says, you're enjoying it. You're harming yourself. And those scars, God in goodness may heal it, heal your mind.

Those scars will be there forever. 50 years later, those scars will be there where you cut yourself. Go and ask people who watch pornography.

50 years later, it comes back to their mind, even though they've repented. Even though they said, I wish I never saw it. But it's there.

You can't get rid of the scars. God says, my dear child, my dear son, it's mostly men who have this problem. Don't do it again.

You're hurting yourself. You're cutting yourself. You're putting scars that will be there forever.

And they'll torture your mind. And you will not grow as you should. It's the same way he speaks about getting angry and yelling at each other.

It's the same thing. When you hurt another person, you don't realize you're hurting yourself also. Yes, you hurt that person by those strong words, angry words.

And if he's a junior person, like a poor peon in the office, or some junior, somebody works under you, or sometimes your husband can intimidate his wife. Intimidate means sort of scare his wife to treat her like an unworthy little servant at home. Some husbands are like that.

You can imagine how evil some husbands are. Just because God made them as men and not as women, they think they are superior. Absolute garbage.

Absolute garbage to think that God could have made you a woman. He made you a man so that you would be a kind leader. And instead of that, if you torment your wife by imposing yourself, shame on you, there also you're hurting yourself.

You know, there's a lot of ingratitude in us. We're not sufficiently grateful as we should be. Thankfulness does not come naturally.

We have to teach our children to say thank you. You know how children are, you give them something, they grab it and go off and say, hey, listen, did you say thank you? We teach them, particularly to other people, when somebody gives them a chocolate and say, say thank you to uncle. It doesn't come naturally.

And it doesn't come naturally to us. All of you who are husbands here, let me ask you. I don't want you to reply to me, reply to yourself.

Is there any husband here who can say your wife has done nothing for you? What a lot she has done for you. Cooking your food, washing your clothes, taking care of the home, bearing you, bringing forth your children into the world. You could never have done that on your own.

Bringing forth your children who have your last name. Are you grateful to your wife for that? With what a lot of pain and agony she went through so many months to bring that one child out who can take your name and all that she does at home. Are you grateful? Gratitude doesn't come naturally.

We have to learn it. Like we have to teach our children to say thank you. God has to teach us to be grateful.

And when we learn it, we make progress. In fact, I'll show you two verses in the New Testament that teaches us that unthankfulness is the first step downwards into the pit of corruption. I've said this before, but for those who have not heard me before, Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1 verse 18 to 32 is a description of the terrible state of man from which Jesus redeemed us, saved us.

See, Romans is a book which starts at zero and teaches us the whole gospel all the way to chapter 16. So, to begin with, he doesn't tell you Christ died for our sins. He tells you what sin is.

Then only he goes in chapter 3 to say how we can be justified in chapter 4 and 5. Then he goes to chapter 6 where he tells about victory over sin and freedom from legalism in chapter 7. Very important. And then life in the spirit in chapter 8. Then he talks about God's sovereignty in chapter 9 and God's righteousness in chapter 10 and God's faithfulness and all that. And finally, how we can become one body in chapter 12.

And it concludes with Romans 16 20, Satan is crushed under your feet. That's Satan who brought Adam and Eve in corruption into their life. It's crushed under our feet, the final victory.

That's Romans. But it has to begin with a definition of sin so that we understand how terrible sin is. And some of the sins we can understand very clearly.

For example, Romans 1 verse 29. Let me read from Romans 1 29. Everybody understands this is sin.

Unrighteousness filled with unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossiping. Some people don't realize gossiping is also in that list along with murder and hatred and all. It is, brother, sister.

Gossiping, slandering, speaking evil of others right in the middle of haters of God. A man who gossips is coupled with a hater of God. Insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil.

And children, listen to this, disobedient to parents. So important. Just like you would teach your child not to steal, teach your child to be obedient to parents is good for them.

It's a good habit. Without understanding, untrustworthy, that means unreliable. You can't trust a person.

Unloving, unmerciful. And even though they know God's law that those who practice such things are worthy of death. Worthy of death.

You mean somebody who's disobedient to parents, verse 30, is worthy of death. Yes. That's why I taught my children to be obedient to parents.

Because I didn't want them to go to die. Not because I like them to obey me. I didn't want them to die eternally.

They not only do the same, but give hearty approval. This is the bottom of the pit. And if you go up from there, up to some of the other evils mentioned there, it says here, go backwards.

Now we have reached the bottom of the pit and we're going up to see some of the other evils that finally ended up in verse 30, 32. One evil is, verse 27, they abandoned the natural function of the woman and became men with men. Aha.

Men getting married to men. Men falling in love with men. And women falling in love with women.

This is not me. This is the Holy Spirit writing in the Bible. You see it happening? It's there.

How did it happen? Because verse 26, God gave them up. It's like saying to somebody, I'm fed up with you. Go get out of my sight.

You get out of God's sight. They go to all these, it's called in verse 26, degrading passions. Passions that bring you into the pit.

What are those passions? Women exchange the natural function for what is unnatural and men abandon the natural function and go with other men committing indecent acts. And the result is they get AIDS. Yeah, that's how AIDS began.

It's there. It's the penalty of their error. So don't get angry with me.

I tell people who, it's God's word. I'm only reading out God's word. And go further up.

We had started at the bottom of the pit and we're trying what all is in this wretched pit. So discovering some of those things in this pit. And some of the other things in this terrible pit are, verse 24, God gave them up.

There are three times here it says God gave them up, God gave them up, God gave them up. Terrible when God gives up on you. You know, it's like a person who is saying, I tried a long time to correct you.

I've given up. Imagine God telling a person, I've given up on you. Terrible.

Three times God has given up. We see that in verse 28. They didn't want to seek, they didn't want to put God into their lives.

So God gave them up. Verse 26, for this reason, God gave them up. And verse 24, therefore God gave them up.

Gave them up so that they would, their bodies would be dishonored among them and they exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship creatures rather than the creator. Worship animals, worship human beings, worship blocks of wood and stone and gold instead of the creator. How does it happen? God has given them up.

It's like saying, I tried so long, you don't change. I give up on you. A terrible thing for God to say that to me.

Now he's not talking about any individual here. He's talking about the race of humanity where a group of people went in this way and God says, okay, I give up on you. Go further up to see more and more of this pit.

Verse 23, exchange the glory of God into an image of man and birds and animals and crawling snakes. Dear me, the glory of the incorruptible God made these things are supposed to be gods. Can you imagine? How did it happen? Because men, verse 22, professed to be wise, but they became fools.

Boasted, we know. Okay, let's go to the right up to the top and see where this pit began. What is the first step downwards that brought us down right, brought people down to the bottom? Here's the first step.

First step downwards, verse 21, when they knew God, they did not honor him or give thanks. They did not give thanks to God. That was the first step downwards that went all the way down to all these things that I told you now.

Have you taken that first step downwards of not being thankful? We have so many complaints against God. Why haven't you healed me? Why have you allowed my child to have this handicap? Uh-huh, yeah, yeah, many, many complaints. Brothers, sisters, can't you think of at least a hundred things God has done for you that you can give thanks for? You pick on this one thing that you feel is bad.

I love to quote a story I heard which I mentioned to the elders yesterday. A teacher put a big white board in front of the children and in the top corner there was a small black dot, that white board, and said, children, please write down what you can see. And all took out their notebooks and papers and wrote, yeah, the teacher can't fool me.

I can see that little black dot in the corner. Teacher thinks I'm going to fool and write down just a white board. No, it's not.

It's a black dot. And every one of them, teacher collects all their answers, and everyone has written, I see a black dot in the corner. And then the teacher said, I want to tell you something.

99.9% of this is white, but none of you wrote that. All of you had eyes for that one black dot. And the teacher said, that is human nature.

Learn a lesson, children. You look at a person, there could be so many good things in that person, but you don't see that. You see that one defect, that the devil has made our eyes sharp to see that one defect.

That's what a husband sees in his wife. He never sees all the good things that is in her, but one thing was wrong, one thing she didn't do it right. One little thing, it could be as silly as not enough salt or too much salt or some stupid thing like that.

But he said, one little defect, or the house is not kept the way I want it kept. What they mean is, the way my parents teach me to keep it, but her parents taught her in some other way. What do you do? Be patient.

Your impatience with your wife or with your husband is a million times worse than that wrong thing they're doing. Do you realize that? Whatever wrong thing your partner is doing, because they were brought up in a different way from your home, your impatience and anger with that is a million times worse than that

particular wrong thing they are doing. That's because you have not learned to give thanks.

This is the first step downwards to the pit of hell. They did not give thanks. Then it says in verse 21, their foolish heart becomes dark.

If you want your heart to become darker and darker and darker, just go down this route of never being thankful for people. When people do something for you, you say thank you. Whenever I ask somebody to do something online and they do it, I always say thank you very much.

Thank you. I want to go down that way. I don't want to go down this downward route of into the pit.

I say, Lord, there must be an opposite to this. This is the way downward. What is the opposite way? The opposite way must be by giving thanks.

I'll show you that. A lot of people want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Let's turn to Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians 5. Don't get drunk with wine.

Ephesians 5, 18. Don't get drunk with wine. That is dissipation.

But be filled with the Holy Spirit. And if you're filled with the Spirit, when you speak to one another, it'll be in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, means a thankfulness. That's what it says here in verse 20.

It's defined as always giving thanks. It's not a speaking thankfulness, but a spirit of thankfulness all the time in the name of Jesus. I'm so thankful for life.

I mean, I may not be in the perfect of health and I've lost my hair and my vision is a little not so good. My hearing is not so good. And there are weaknesses, but that's okay.

I want to give thanks for a million things which I have. Not focus on the little things you don't have or the little aches and pains. When somebody asks you, brother, how are you? What do you give a big definition of all the sicknesses your doctor says you have? You know, I'm fine.

I'm okay. Think of the million good things you have, brother. Always giving thanks for all things in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is the other way. We saw the other way going down, not giving thanks and you go down into the pit. Here's the other way.

Always giving thanks in the name of Jesus to God. First of all, to God. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord, for life. Thank you for health. And though I don't have everything I need and a few more things I'd like to have in my home, but I can't afford it.

Thank you. I have a home. I have a roof over my head.

Yeah. Learn to give thanks, brothers. It makes a tremendous difference.

I'm thankful that when Annie and I got married, we had zero. When I say zero, I mean zero. There's nothing in my bank account and we struggled.

So we learned to be thankful for little things. And I'm very thankful we started like that. Because I had quit my job to serve the Lord and I'd given away all my money for God's work.

But He didn't let us starve. He didn't let us beg. He never even allowed us to borrow.

Little by little, we had the, you know, inconvenience, let me say, of having to stay with my parents initially. More inconvenient for Annie than for me. But what to do? I said, Lord, I don't have any money.

I can't rent a house. I wish I could, but I don't have it. But I'm not going to beg.

I'm not going to join some Christian organization and preach to make money. I'll never in my life preach to make money. Never.

And if you allow me to go through this struggle and a humiliation, it is a humiliation when you get married and you tell your wife, I'm sorry, I can't afford to rent a house. I've got to live with my parents. It's pretty humiliating for me as a man.

And it was like that for four years. I said, fine, Lord, I'm willing to face this humiliation for your sake. Because I could have lived in a big house as a naval officer, but you told me to give it all up.

I gave it up. But when I look back over it today, as I've often said, God was training me for something I never knew. I never knew in those days that you don't preach by Bible knowledge.

I had a lot of Bible knowledge and I was preaching, but the Lord taught me you have to be a forerunner, a mini forerunner. If Jesus had to be the forerunner, had to go through all temptations, tempted in all points as we are to be our forerunner, you don't have to go through the whole lot. But for the ministry I have for you in the future, I have to take you some very difficult paths, which other people don't have to go to because they're not going to have such a ministry.

I'm going to give you a big ministry. And that ministry, big ministry means not to the big people in the world, to the poor people in Tamil Nadu, in the poorest villages in India. I realized it only 20 years later that I go to those villages and some of those people are so poor, they live from hand to mouth, they don't have any savings, and they get married, they have to live with their parents or some part of their parents' house.

I can go to them and say, I'm your forerunner. I lived like that for many years. I fully understand what you're going through, brother.

Now, the rest of you don't and never did that because God never called you to that ministry. He hasn't called you to minister to the poor villagers in the poorest villages in Tamil Nadu, so you can rent a house and live from the day you're married, fine. But I was called in a different way.

I don't envy you, not at all. God bless you, brother. I was more passionate that I must fulfill the plan God had for my life before I was born.

I said, Lord, I'm willing to pay any price. Annie said the same thing when she was converted. I'm willing to pay any price to follow the Lord, otherwise she wouldn't have married me.

Who in the world will go and marry a man who's got no bank account and no salary? But God's been good to us. What I say is, we learn to give thanks when we had nothing. When I say nothing, literally nothing.

In everything, give thanks. You know, one advantage of being at the bottom, you know what it is? After that, the only way you can go is up. So from that bottom, God blessed us little by little by little.

But it also brought into our hearts some tremendous compassion and understanding of the needs of poor people, even some very poor brothers who come to CFC, who are poor villagers whose parents have got nothing to give them, struggling to find a job, struggling to support themselves. I have tremendous compassion for every one of them, because I've gone that way myself. I know you have compassion, but I don't believe you can have as much as I have, because you never went that way yourself.

You were well off from the day you got married, you had a job and everything else, and probably a good salary. So what I want to say is, learn to give thanks for everything. Don't complain.

I remember the devil would tempt me in those days and say, see where you are? You could have been a big naval officer with a big house all to yourself in some naval base, and here you are struggling, not even a proper house to live in. I would say, Lord, you called me, so I have no complaint. So I'm not going to yield to the devil's temptations.

Do you ever yield to the devil's temptations to complain about something? Yeah, we've had our struggles also with our children. Many of them had some sicknesses when they were children. We had to take them for surgery, something or the other, little, little things that all of us face.

But I say, Lord, thank you. There's something in everything. There's something to give thanks.

It could have been worse. Thank you. It's not so bad.

Dear brothers and sisters, the way downwards is when you stop giving thanks. The way up is always giving thanks for everything, even if you can't understand it. Lord, there must be some reason why you're taking me through this.

I've learned to say that from the time I understood God's ways. There must be some reason why you are taking me through this right now. I want to give thanks.

I may know it only 10 years from now or 20 years from now, but there must be some reason. Even when, you know, if I carelessly lost a lot of money, I had to be very careful with money because I had so little. And once when my father gave me some inheritance, I had to be very careful with it so that I could invest it and earn something from it.

I had to be very, very careful. And sometimes I lost through carelessness some large amount of money. I remember one instance where I lost a large amount of money because not I was careless, but I couldn't do something in time.

To earn that money investment, because I had gone for some meeting somewhere at that time. And by the time I came back three days later, the opportunity to make that investment was gone. I couldn't get it.

And I lost thousands of rupees. And I said, Lord, thank you. Money doesn't mean everything to me.

I lost a few thousands of rupees. It's okay. I will thank you because I did not go seeking my own.

I went there to serve you. I went there to serve. And the Lord allowed me to lose this investment opportunity that I lost that was only available during those three days when I was at meetings.

And the Lord said, will you do that again if you have to go for meetings? I said, Lord, I'll do that a million times. To go and serve you somewhere and I lose money, I'm willing to lose a hundred times more than I lost here. I took that attitude.

God's work is more important than anything I have. I'm willing to lose many thousands. I won't tell you exactly how much, but it was a huge amount of money which I could not afford.

Thousands of rupees. And I said, Lord, I'm willing to lose it to serve you. Are you willing? How much do you love Jesus? But I'll tell you one thing.

Till today, I have never starved. None of my children have starved. We always had three meals a day.

I've never borrowed money. How many of you can say that? Never owed anybody even one rupee. God took care of me.

Honor God. That's all I'm trying to say. I'm giving you my testament only to teach you that if you honor God, he'll honor you.

And you won't always know the result. Sometimes we will know the result only in eternity. But this particular event where I lost this money, two years later, I was at a conference, RCFC conference, and one brother got up and testified.

He said, two years earlier, I was in such and such a place, and brother Zach came to preach to us, and that is the place that I went. And I got converted there. I said, wow.

The day I lost all this money, this one man got converted. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? One soul is worth more than the whole world. But the Lord did not allow me to know that till two years later.

To see whether I would serve him even if I lost, even if there's nothing gained. But the Lord comforted me two years later saying, you did gain something. One eternal soul.

That encouraged me so much, I've never forgotten it. I said, Lord, I'll only serve you all my life. Whatever the loss, whatever the sacrifice, I will never count in terms of money.

I'll count in terms of eternal values. My brother, sister, God doesn't just pick up somebody and says, I'm going to use you. He tests him.

Are you willing to sacrifice everything to serve me? And I believe that God has tested some of you and you have failed the test. That's why he could not use you. He could have used you much more for something that would last for all eternity.

And now when I look back, what is that few thousands of rupees that I lost and here all eternity, I will rejoice to meet this one brother in heaven forever. How can I compare that with millions and millions of rupees on earth? Dear brothers and sisters, live with eternal values in mind always. This is eternal life.

To know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. To know God as a compassionate, loving, merciful God, who if he takes you through a tough time, it's for your good. You may think he has left you.

He hasn't. I remember the days and all of you who have children also would know, have this experience. The first day we take our child to school, kindergarten.

The child doesn't know where he's going. You take him and leave him at the school. And he's wondering why your daddy's walking away or mommy's walking away.

And cries and cries and you ignore his cries. Can you imagine such a heartless father and mother? Child is crying and crying and you just say goodbye and you go. Is it because you love the child? If you hate that child, you'll take that child back home and never allow him to get an education.

You love that child and that's why you allow that child to cry on the first day of school like anything. You may cry the second day, cry for a whole week. But you ask that child 20 years later what you did for him.

God is like that. He leaves you somewhere and you cry and cry and cry. I want you.

Why aren't you answering my prayer? Why aren't you doing it? And he leaves you. And when that happens in your life, brother, think of the day you took your child to kindergarten first day and think what the result of that was. Say, thank you, Lord.

You'll allow me to cry today, but I know there's something glorious for me in the future. He's a good God. I'll tell you, my brother, sister, after 64 years of knowing this wonderful God, I'll tell you with all my heart, he's a good God.

He's a merciful, compassionate, kind. Like I was thinking of that, there's one of my favorite songs we sang at the end. You know, the last verse of it, Father of Jesus loves reward.

What rapture will it be? Prostrate before thy throne to lie. I felt like lying on the floor there. People would have thought something's wrong if I didn't do it.

Prostrate before thy throne to lie and gaze and gaze on thee. Do you know that? I do that sometimes in the middle of the night on my bed, alone before the Father. What rapture it is, Lord, to just gaze and gaze on thee.

No requests. I'm not asking you for anything. Just to look at you and look at your love, you know, like a little two-year-old looking at his father and so happy.

Do you ever look at God like that? Spend time like that, my brother, and we can't do it when other people are watching us. It's embarrassing. But when you're alone, you know, I remember once I asked the Lord, Lord, you always used to go out to Nazareth someplace alone.

Early morning, you'd go out and be alone in some uninhabited area. But Nazareth, those days, was so small town, so you could walk one or two miles and you'd go to an uninhabited area. Bangalore, you've got to walk 100 miles, you won't go to an uninhabited area.

What do you do? So how do I find a place to be alone? And the Lord said, when you're alone at home, at night, in the middle of the night, when you wake up, that is your lonely place. You can be alone with me. You don't have to raise your voice.

I can hear your thoughts. Learn to be a worshiper. Learn to give thanks.

I have some precious times when I wake up in the middle of the night, alone with God, sitting like a two-year-old on his lap. This is eternal life, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. See, it says in Isaiah, in chapter 61, Jesus came, and the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted, and so on.

And it says in verse 2, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. Did you read that? Favor and vengeance, goodness and judgment, both are there. And God does both.

He shows goodness and He brings judgment also. One day there'll be people who go to hell forever. But notice this.

Let me paraphrase it. Verse 2, 365 days of favor and one day of judgment. Do you see the proportion? 365 days of favor, one day of judgment.

The glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth. 365 grace, one truth. That's the proportion.

Strictness and kindness, 365 times as strict as God is, He is kind. Never forget that. Is God strict with you? Thank God, so that you don't go astray.

But I'll tell you this, He's 365 times more kind and merciful. Think of those things and be thankful. The thing is we take some of those things for granted.

As I said, you take the things that your wife does in the house, sacrifices for granted. You take the things, the sacrifices your husband is making in the office, the struggles he's having with a difficult boss and people shouting at him in the office, he endures it all to take care of your family. We don't think of all that.

Be thankful. The same way be thankful to God for His kindness. This is eternal life to know God.

I want to know God more and more and I found the more I've known God, my inner life comes to rest. There's no panic anymore. You see, you don't know, this future is uncertain.

You don't know what will happen, but I know that my Father is with me and He prepares me. He'll prepare me ahead of time for He will not allow me to be tested beyond my ability. You know that verse and those of you who don't know, it's a wonderful verse.

It's helped me for years. 1 Corinthians 10 13. 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13.

Please all of you remember this verse. 1 Corinthians 10 13. Underline it in your Bible.

God is faithful to do one thing. God is faithful, the middle of that verse, to do one thing. Never to let you, in the first part of that verse, face a temptation that is too much for you to bear, middle of that verse.

Never to allow you to face some temptation that is too much for you to and you get married to a very difficult man or a difficult woman and oh, there'll be a lot of trials when you're married to someone who's difficult. But if you are faithful to the Lord, I assure you, He will never allow you, my dear brother, my dear sister, to face something too much for you to bear. Never.

This is my Father, your Father. But He will give you grace and He'll give you some way of help that you can endure it. He will give you grace to endure it.

Believe it. That's why you need never complain even as you look into the uncertain future. I have nothing to complain.

Why? Because I have a loving Father who has promised me that from now till the day Jesus comes or till the day I leave this earth, I will not face a single situation that is too much for me to bear. I have been a Christian for nearly 65 years. I can testify in 65 years, I've never faced a situation too much for me to bear.

I've faced some tough situations. I remember when I came to Bangalore for the first time. We were in Vellore up to 1972 and God told Annie and me to move to Bangalore when we knew nobody here.

Nobody means nobody. And we moved here. We were living in a rented house for a while, few months before God gave us our own place.

And within in that rented house, I remember still, within a couple of months, in the month of August 1972, I got asthma. And somebody told me Bangalore is one of the two worst places in India for asthma, especially after the rains, August. I didn't know that.

I said, Lord, you led us here. What am I going to live with my asthma for the rest of my life? And I'll tell you, I couldn't lie down in bed because I lie down, I can't sleep. It's the honest truth.

I had to sit up in a chair to sleep at night. And I had to get these pumps or you pump something into your mouth, a spray, so that I can breathe every day, every night. I didn't understand.

I said, Lord, what is this? Did I make a mistake in coming to Bangalore? When I looked today, I said, I certainly didn't make a mistake. But there were trials. When Jesus came to earth to save the world, it wasn't an easy time for him.

It wasn't an easy time for his mother. There was no place to deliver a baby. You mothers know how much you need a little bit of privacy, at least when you're delivering a baby.

There was nothing for her. The Son of God is coming on to earth. And the Father in heaven, who had millions of years to prepare, could not prepare one little room for his son.

He could have easily arranged one room being empty. Why did he not do it? Why did he allow his son to be born in the midst of animals with donkeys and cows around? No, even the beggars don't have their children born in such surroundings. No human being was ever born in such a low down surrounding as Jesus was born, because he came underneath everybody.

Nobody could say that you had it easy, Lord. He did not have it easy. So I realized that if you want to serve the Lord, the more the Lord is going to use you in the days to come, then the Lord has to take you through much more suffering at various times.

Anyway, the good news is that God filled me with the Holy Spirit and healed me 100 percent, so that I could even drive the scooter in the rain in the month of August and come back without wheezing. It's gone. But I had to go through the test to see, can I trust God when you think God led you here, and then when you get there, you get sick? You know, when I preached that Jesus was sick, many people don't believe it.

I mean, Paul was sick. He had a thorn in the flesh, which the Lord never removed. And Timothy had stomachs infirmities all the time.

I don't know how many times Paul laid hands on Timothy, but he had stomachs infirmities all the time. And the Bible says that Jesus was sick. That's the thing that puzzled me.

And you know, the people who translated the Bible could not dare to put it like that. But the original Hebrew in which it is written, it says He was acquainted with sickness. Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53 and verse 3. We have got an NASB, which I believe is the most accurate version, with a margin in the middle. Let me read it to you. Isaiah 53 verse 3, speaking about Jesus, He was despised and forsaken of men.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And the margin says, the original word is sickness. But the translators could not put that because they couldn't believe that Jesus was sick.

Acquainted with sickness. And it is our sickness, verse 4, not grief, but our sickness that He bore. And for a confirmation, turn to Matthew chapter 8. And you will see when Jesus healed the sick in verse 16, Matthew 8, 16.

The last part. He cast out the spirits of the world and healed all who were sick. Matthew 8, 16.

Why? To fulfill what was written by Isaiah the prophet, that He took our sicknesses and carried our diseases. Which verse is that? Isaiah 53, 4. He took our sicknesses and He healed the sick. And then you put that into verse 3. He was acquainted with sickness.

Sickness, to be sick is not a sin. I've discovered that. Whenever you're sick, it's not because you're sin.

If sickness is the result of sin, Jesus would never have been sick. But no, when you're sick, sometimes it can be the result of sin. You know, Jesus told one man whom He had healed, don't sin again, otherwise something worse will happen to you.

He told one of the people whom He healed, He said that in John's gospel. But sickness is not always the result of sin. Sometimes it's because we live in a world where there's so much infection.

And Jesus had to be tempted in all points as we are. And all of us know that sickness is one of those terrible temptations. When it comes to us, we don't know what to do.

I tell you, there were two times in my life when you feel like dying. One is when I got asthma, I can't breathe, can't breathe. You really feel like dying.

I said, boy, this is terrible. The other is when I was in the Navy and you get seasick in the middle of the ocean and you know that you're not going to come to shore for many, many days and the boat is turning, turning, turning and some people don't get sick. I used to go terribly seasick.

I'll tell you, you really feel like dying at such times. The other is when I had asthma. If Jesus was not tempted with sickness as one part of our experience, He missed out completely.

But the Father determined that He would be our forerunner even in that area. He was acquainted with sickness. I thank God, I thank Jesus my Savior that He became a forerunner for me in every area.

I remember when some religious people took me to court and I was scared because I heard that the magistrate had been bribed. My lawyer told me that. I thought they wanted to imprison me for some silly

reason.

The day I stepped in the court, the first day, the first step, the Lord said to me, don't be afraid. Religious people took me also to court before you, so don't be afraid. Trust me, look for my footsteps here in the court.

I said, Lord, what are those footsteps? Footsteps of faith and love. Like in the military, left, right, left, right, left, right, it was faith, love, faith, love, faith, love. Those are my footsteps, the Lord said.

Faith in a Heavenly Father who's in complete control of everything that's going to happen in this court. First day, the Lord told me that. I had to face it for 10 years when I heard it the first day.

And the love is, love your accusers. Don't have even slight bitterness or hatred towards them, and I decided. Till today, I've forgiven them, loved them.

I don't have any bitterness or hatred towards them. I don't wish any of them to go to hell. Or be punished even.

I said, Father, forgive them, Lord. They don't know what they're doing. Faith and love.

I'll tell you, my brothers, sisters, are you having problems with difficult in-laws, difficult relatives, difficult neighbors? Jesus has experienced it all. Look for his footsteps of faith and love. Faith in a Heavenly Father who will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability.

From an in-law, from mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law who cheats you of your property or anything, he will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability. If somebody, your relative, cheated you of your property, it's to make you a better Christian. Yeah.

Give thanks. Give thanks, and you'll go upward. Complain against your in-laws.

You start down the pit. You know where that pit ended? You saw in Romans chapter 1. Don't go that way. Go the other way.

Lord, I'm going to give thanks. And I learned to give thanks. I learned to give thanks when I was in court.

I remember the first day when I heard this word from the Lord. I stood smiling before the magistrate and all the others. We know people go to court gloomy, fearful, and some in handcuffs and all that.

And here, he saw me smiling, and I think he felt so guilty because, I don't know whether he had taken money or not. I don't know. I don't want to accuse anybody.

I heard it. But he saw me guilty. But I'll tell you what I saw.

I had to stand there for one hour. He looked at me once, and after that, he looked down, and he never looked at me again for one hour. It's almost as though he had seen the face of God.

Imagine. He's the criminal who should be afraid in the court. Here, the judge was afraid because I had heard God.

I'd seen the face of God. I'd seen the face of Jesus. I trusted him.

I was happy. And as soon as the day's hearing was over and my accuser walked by, I grabbed a hand. I said, God bless you with a smile.

They were surprised. Faith and love. Never, never miss walking in those footsteps.

This is eternal life. It's a wonderful life, my brothers, sisters. I'll tell you from 64 years of experience, I've not always walked perfectly.

The last few years have been the most blessed of my whole life. And when your walk with God is pleasant, your health also improves, provided you don't eat the wrong things. God bless you all.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you're such a loving Father, so good to us in every way. And when we see you in eternity, Lord Jesus, face to face, we will be ashamed that we trusted you so little.

We'll be ashamed that we complained about silly little things. We'll be ashamed that we got upset with our marriage partners and with others and others when we should have just loved them and been good to them. Lord, help us at least now to wake up, to turn around today, fill us with the Holy Spirit, so that we can give thanks in all things.

And help us to walk anew from this day with your face shining upon us day by day. Grant it like that for, Lord, every person who is gloomy or disturbed here today. Encourage everyone.

Don't let anyone go home today in the way they came to this meeting. Let them go home with a spring in their step, a song in their heart. Pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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