

The New Covenant Life and Church - Part 3

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being honest with oneself and seeking God's glory, and warns against the dangers of pride and self-deception.

Duration: 1:28:10

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Matthew 5:13-16, Luke 1:38, Ephesians 5:18-20, Philippians 2:14-15, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit and partaking of God's divine nature rather than just imitating Christ externally. It highlights the need for God's nature to take over our lives, leading to a transformation from within. The speaker encourages humility, equality, and a commitment to building the body of Christ in unity and service to one another.

Transcript

When we think of the many, many religions there are in the world, and you put them all together, they are much bigger than Christianity. Even among Christians, there are so many different denominations. And so many cult groups, like Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.

All these religions, there is one thing common. They are all absolutely convinced that God is with them. Even the people who kill others as suicide bombers, they are sure that God is with them.

So many things people do, kill people, hurt people, and they think God is with them. People who divide families, they think God is with them. How can we be sure that God is with us? We also meet in different places, small groups, and say God is with us.

How do you know you are not fooling yourself like those suicide bombers, thinking God is with them? It is very important to be sure. In the same way, I find among Christians, even though a lot of people may act humble saying, well, I am only a sinner saved by grace. Very often, that is only to get a reputation for humility.

Because, if you look inside their heart, these people who say that, they are quite proud. You know, in prayer, they will say, oh Lord, I am such a wretch. But if they heard that somebody else said that they were wretches, they will be quite upset.

But that is what they said before God in prayer. There is a tremendous amount of hypocrisy in the flesh. There is a tremendous amount of conceit and pride to think that God is with me and I am a spiritual man.

And whenever we think we are very spiritual, we have a great lust to correct everybody around us. And whenever we think we are very spiritual, we have a great lust to correct everybody around us. We see 101 things wrong in all of them.

If not 101 things, at least 4 or 5 things wrong. We think we are the appointed people by God, Almighty God, to correct all these things. We think we are the appointed people by God, Almighty God, to correct all these things.

I have been a believer for 57 years and I have seen so much of this. All these things I just mentioned. And my prayer has been, Lord, please save me from all this, because I could also be like this.

I can have a false humility. I can have a great lust to correct other people. I can imagine that God is with me.

I can think that God is supporting me. I can imagine that I am speaking for God. How to ensure that we don't deceive ourselves? See, if God bears witness to it, there will be some evidence of it outside.

See Jeremiah 17. He speaks about two types of people here. One is, let me sum it up in verse 5. A man, a person who makes his own flesh his strength.

That means I am confident in myself, in my ability. The result will be, I will be like a barren bush, in the desert, and with no fruit. So, if I am trusting in myself, there is a proof of it.

There is no fruit. But the one who trusts in the Lord, in verse 8, he will be like a tree planted by the river, always bearing fruit, never ceasing to yield fruit, it says in verse 8. Compare that to what Jesus said in John 15. He says here, John 15, verse 5. If you abide in me, I in you, you will bear much fruit.

That's the proof that I am abiding in Christ. And fruit has got two areas. One is the fruit in my character.

And the other is the fruit in my labors or ministry. So, I have a good way of checking myself. You know, a student, for example, can think he is very clever.

I am very good in mathematics. But if he gets 0 or 20%, he discovers pretty soon. So, that's why in schools they have examinations.

To convince all the people who think they are clever that they are not so clever. You think you are so clever, look what marks you got. And a person must face up to it and say, that's right, I thought I was very clever, but I discovered I am not.

No, I think a student who gets 20%, will not thereafter think he is very clever. But the trouble with Christians is different. Even if there is no fruit, they still think they are very spiritual.

I mean, they are still losing their temper, no victory over sin. They still think they are very spiritual. In all their work, there is no fruit, they think they are very spiritual.

But Jesus said, if you abide in me, he didn't just say you will bring one or two fruit. He said, you will bring much fruit, verse 5. And it says here, that in verse 2, when you bear fruit, my father, who is the wine

dresser, will prune you to bear even more fruit. So that means the Lord is never satisfied with the fruit that comes in my life.

And God says, boy, that's great, there is so much fruit in your life. I am going to cut you a little bit, discipline you. Does the Lord discipline people who are bearing fruit? Read carefully, verse 2. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it.

We think it is the branch that is not bearing fruit, that he is going to discipline. The branch that is not bearing fruit, he leaves it alone to live in their self-deception. Because the only reason they don't bear fruit is because they are proud.

They think too much of themselves. There is no fruit in their character, there is no fruit in their labors. Why doesn't God prune them? Because the Bible says, there is a law, like the law of gravity.

God resists the proud. He gives grace only to the humble. Do you know that even the Apostle Paul was in danger of becoming proud? Any of you who think that you are not in danger of becoming proud, you are really conceited.

The only person who walked on this earth without any danger of becoming proud was Jesus Christ. Because there is no conscious or unconscious in him. And he lived in such constant, unbroken fellowship with the Father every moment.

Such a person can never be proud, he is constantly humble. Such a person has grace upon Jesus life. He could heal thousands of sick people and never made them proud.

But it was not automatic. He followed the laws. I will show you the example.

In Luke chapter 5, It says in verse 15, News about Jesus spread further and great multitudes gathered to hear them and to be healed of their sickness. That hasn't happened to any of us. But supposing this happens to you, just think.

That God gives you such a tremendous gift to the Holy Spirit. That your name becomes quite famous in many parts of the world. Lord, a lot of people come to hear you.

That you have the gift of healing and so many people are healed. What would you do? I know, you would thank the Lord. Do you know what Jesus did? See the next verse.

He would often slip away into the wilderness and pray. Why did he do that? Couldn't he say, I am not in danger of getting pride? He was tempted just like us. Bible says that in Hebrews 4.15. That has been the greatest encouragement to me in my Christian life.

That my Savior was tempted exactly like me. When he became famous, he was in danger of pride, just like you and me. And he had to do something about it.

He had to immediately rush off into the wilderness and get along with God, the Father. See, most believers, they pray before the meeting. Or on your spirit, do a great work.

Jesus prayed after the meeting. Father, what a fantastic work you did. I want to humble myself before you.

Whenever God blesses you, That's the time to pray. That's what you learn here. Often, Slipped away, you know what I mean? Slipped away, this is the picture I get in my mind.

You know, 15-20 people are meeting. He says, okay folks, I am going to pray now. That's not slipping away.

No, this is between 20 people, Where did Jesus go? He was here just now. You don't know where he's gone. That is the way to go and pray.

Nobody knows where he went. After some time you come back, you don't let anybody know where he went. No, these little verses you can learn a lot about what it means to walk as Jesus walked.

I was studying somebody the other day. He'd take a verse like this. And he himself would slip away into the wilderness and pray.

You don't meditate on that, go to the next verse. You don't get anything from it. And you don't discover what is hidden in that verse as to how Jesus lived on earth.

But you should have a passion to say, Lord, I want to know how you lived because that's the way I want to live. Lord, I want to know how you lived because that's the way I want to live. Where nobody knew that he was praying.

Afterwards they discovered. That's why it's written there. But he never made a big public announcement about it.

Here's another example. After a big healing, After 4 verse 40, When the sun was setting, many people brought various diseases. And he would say, Lay his hands on all of them and heal them.

It was already around 6 o'clock in the evening. Sun was setting. And many people with various diseases came.

And he could have said, It's getting late, I think I'll just pray. General prayer for all these 2,000 people here. No, but he called them one by one and he laid hands on every single one of them.

Can you imagine how many hours it took to lay hands on 2,000 people? These are the little things you have to meditate on when you read this scripture. If you want to learn to walk as Jesus walked. You have to see what is hidden inside the verse.

Not just read it superficially. What is hidden inside? So it was pretty late by the time he went to bed, maybe 2 o'clock at night. There were also demons being cast out, verse 41.

And when the sun rose, he went off again into wilderness, verse 42. He went to sleep at 2 o'clock. He was up at 5. Why? Oh Father, what a fantastic ministry that was yesterday.

What am I going to do now? And the multitude searched for him. And they said, don't go away from here. There is a great revival going on.

Continue with that. He said, no. He is saying, before I met you fellows, I already met my father.

I thought you people will come and tell me something, but I wanted to check up with my father. I know what you will say. Whatever is a blessing, it is yours.

Jesus must be here with you. They don't take care of so many other places that want to hear him also. There also we see our selfishness.

We think only of ourselves. There is a person who has blessed us and let him be with us forever. Jesus knew they were telling that.

They prayed to the father. Father said, don't stay here. So that is how Jesus lived.

You must see what is hidden in the verse. Between the lines. Then you will know how to walk as Jesus.

So when God bears witness to something, if you want that blessing to continue, you will go before God and give all the glory to him. I can't take any credit for my own life. I can't take any credit for my ministry.

I said the apostle Paul was in danger of crying. But the wonderful thing was he recognized it. If you recognize that you got the beginnings of cancer in your body, then you won't get it.

Pride is worse than cancer. But if you are not aware of it, it can spread and spread and ruin you. 2 Corinthians 12, Paul says, that he got a thorn in the flesh.

And do you know what he says in verse 7? It was given to me. Given means like a gift. God sent him a gift.

Supposing somebody gives you a beautiful nicely wrapped box with a ribbon. A very expensive wrapping, very expensive box. You open the box.

Expecting a diamond or something. And there is a thorn. You wonder what sort of gift it is.

Only God gives such gifts. Because he is not interested in impressing us. He is interested in helping us.

But it requires grace to see that this is a gift from God. When he says it was given to me, it means he got a gift. A gift from God.

What was in that box? A thorn. You call that a gift? Can you define it in another way? What is that gift? Yes. Same verse in verse 7. A messenger of Satan.

Satan's messenger. To harass a man like Paul, can God send Satan? How can Satan harass a man like Paul? How can Satan harass a man like Paul? God allowed this messenger of Satan, which was a sickness, to buffet Paul. I believe it was a sickness.

That troubled him. He prayed, Lord, take it away, take it away. This is a procreation for me.

Three times he prayed. And he got an answer. If he hadn't got an answer, he would have prayed 300 times.

The point here is not he prayed three times. The point is he prayed until he got an answer. Whether it was three times or 300 times.

And the answer he got was, I am not going to take it away. I am not going to take it away. Just by singing Jesus, can a man like Paul say that God is not there when he prays? Yes.

Why? Because you are in danger of becoming proud. God says that. To keep me from exalting myself.

He said, Paul, you are such a spiritual man and you are in danger of spiritual pride? He said, yes, brothers. Even a man like me, I am in danger of spiritual pride. If you don't see that danger in yourself, you will fall.

You will fall into pride and God's grace will be removed from your life. You will still know the scriptures. You may still live an upright life.

And the worst part is, you will think you are very spiritual. If you went to the Pharisees in Jesus' time, do you think they thought they were not spiritual? They thought they were so spiritual they could even correct Jesus. You have to be really arrogant to think that you can correct Jesus.

How spiritual they thought they were? What was their real condition? Jesus said, how will you escape the damnation of hell? You are not spiritual. You are a generation of vipers. To be so low and to think you are so high because they knew the Bible.

They could preach. Because they were in a good synagogue. Their life was upright.

Do you know, the proudest Christians are the ones who are very righteous in their life. They don't commit sin. They got only one sin.

They are so proud that's how spiritual they think they are. They are the biggest nuisance in every church. They are the ones whom God is resisting.

You know, in the Navy, we used to have competitions of rowing boats. So, with different boats, rowing. We used to have twelve people pulling the oars to move the boat forward.

They are all pulling together. Now, imagine if two or three are pushing the other way. They will be hindering the work.

Those are the pious people actually. All the humble people are pulling to go forward. Two or three Pharisees who think they are very spiritual are hindering the work of God.

And even when they hear a message like this, of course, they look around and say, who is the Pharisee around here? It's not me. No. There are many weaknesses in the disciples.

You know what they were arguing about at the last supper? What were they discussing? After Jesus died, who will be the leader? It's like when a father is dying and the children are sitting around, who will get the property when we die? The father is dying. The children are arguing about who will get the property. We don't know how soon we are going to die.

We have to repent soon. That looks so horrible. That's what they were discussing at the last supper.

Who is going to be the leader now? That was a bad quality. There is a good quality. Have you noticed a good quality there? Jesus said, one of you is going to betray me.

Let him look around at you. Who is that? You know what every one of them said? Lord, Lord, this is I. What a fantastic quality. We may think we are better than the disciples.

We may think we are better than the disciples. But when you hear a message, do you ever think, that's a good message for so and so? Or do you say, Lord, this is I. I know I have come across places where a

husband says, boy, I am glad my wife is here in this meeting so she can hear what is being preached. Good she didn't miss this meeting.

If she missed it, we will make sure we play it at home. Or the other way around. I mean, husband is here to listen.

Learn from the disciples. Lord, this is I. This is I. This is a way of spiritual progress. When I read something in the book, we should have this attitude.

Hebrews chapter 10. Hebrews chapter 10. Verse 7. Middle of that verse.

In the role of the book, it is written about me. Not about somebody else. Do you believe that? In the book, it is written about me.

What I read there was about me. What I heard in that message was about me. Those are the people who are really pulling in the right direction, helping the church to go forward.

We have had a lot of experience in India of different places trying to start a church. Many many places. I don't want to mention all of them.

Many years we tried. Many people were leaving. There were different people.

There was no fruit. God did not bear witness. Those people who were in the meeting, they thought they were very spiritual.

There was no fruit. They still thought they were very spiritual. They never judged themselves.

We tried for many years. I can think of one, two, three, four places at least. I said, close down the meeting.

Or you can please go to some other church. People were gathering to try and form a CSE church. At least four places in India.

I said, close it down. Please go. There is some A.G. church here.

There is some brethren church. Please go somewhere else. Imagine me telling people to go to some other church.

That's because we have tried so many years and God is not bearing witness to anything. I don't know. I love you all.

But if God doesn't bear witness, I can't do anything about it. Some places they say, come here, we want to build a church here. I said, no, I will not come.

I can't plant any church. I tried to produce something to be Ishmael. I won't do it.

Fifty years ago, I tried once or twice, I produced two Ishmaels. I decided, never again. God has to do a work.

Only he can produce Isaiah. So I say, I will never come to start a church anywhere in the world. I will wait for God to do something then I will come behind God, not in front of God.

God is a time for everything. That's what many people don't realize. Something may be the will of God, but it may not be God's time yet.

For example, the Lord told Adam, the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. But when did the seed of the woman come? Do you know? Let me show you that verse. Genesis 3. Verse 15.

The Lord told the serpent, the seed of the woman will crush your head. And he heard it. Adam heard it.

What is that? The seed of the woman will crush your head for what you did to Adam. So, when Adam and Eve were put out, chapter 4, verse 1, the man had relations with his wife Eve. And she conceived and gave birth to a son.

She conceived and gave birth to a son. His name was Cain. In the margin of my Bible, she named him Cain.

This is exactly what she said. That means I have given birth to myself who is Jehovah. That means she thought, this is the child God said is going to crush the serpent's head.

I heard God say just about a year ago that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. I heard God has given me that seed. I can't blame her.

Because she thought, this is the first child being born. I got a man-child, even the Lord. That was not a man-child.

He was just the seed of the devil. The next child was also not the seed. For 4000 years there was no seed.

Finally, we read in Galatians 4, verse 4, in the fullness of time, God sent his son. So, there is a promise given, but the time was not yet. That's what we learn about the most important event that took place in human history.

The body of Christ being born. He thought it was going to be immediate. Do you know, in Israel, so many young girls thought, maybe I will become the mother of the Messiah.

No, there was a promise. Messiah will be born. And the mothers would tell their daughters, maybe you will be the mother of the Messiah.

Didn't happen. Didn't happen for so many years. Finally, God found a woman.

She was not a very old woman. Mary was probably about 19 years old. People married at that age in Israel.

And why did God choose Mary? God was not looking for someone who was very beautiful. What marks did she get in mathematics? Unimportant. What she could do.

Unimportant. God wanted a woman who was willing to accept whatever lot God gave. The same way the angel came to Mary in Luke chapter 1. Why am I saying all this? Because this is defining the birth of the body of Christ.

And the body of Christ is also the church. So it is a picture of the birth of a church in some place. Through whom will the church be born? Through someone like Mary.

God looks over all of Israel. He doesn't find girls through whom Jesus can be born. Finally, God found one girl.

And the angel comes in Luke 1 and says you are going to have a child. Verse 31. And Mary says how can that happen? Verse 34.

I am a virgin. That's ok. The Holy Spirit will come and you will have a child.

Immediately. Can you imagine today an unmarried girl who is fooling around with boys but trying to be careful. One day she discovers she is pregnant.

She tries her best not to get pregnant while fooling around with boys. Look at the scare. What will people say? What will my parents say? What will my neighbors say? Nowadays it is very common.

So it is not such a shame. But 2000 years ago it was almost unheard of. A good girl brought up in a house to become pregnant.

Immediately Mary thought what will happen to me? Nobody believed that the Holy Spirit came out of me. My whole name will be spoiled in the village. I have lived such a good life and my name is spoiled in the village.

She could have said No Lord that is too much for me to bear. Do you think God would have forced me? Never. God never forces anybody.

Mary, I tell God you are not ready. Think what she would have missed. She would have lost her baby.

She would have lost her baby because she did not want to bear the shame. Even today there is a shame giving birth to the body of Jesus Christ. When we started CFC in Bangalore 40 years ago every denomination in India hated us.

Some people from their groups were coming to our church. Not only me even from those churches the teachers in the school were troubling my children also. So much that one of my sons said I am fed up of being in this school.

They are just troubling me unnecessarily. Because people from that teacher's church were coming to our church. You cannot have the body of Christ without pain and misunderstanding.

I said fine. Mary went through it. All of us would like to have an easy, comfortable being in the body without any shame without any ridicule.

Why does God look for a woman who is like Mary? She is willing to bear the shame. Not only that You know the story They went to Bethlehem She had to ride on this donkey all the way. It's like riding on bad roads.

Then she reached Bethlehem. You know it's about 80-100 kilometers. Can you think of a pregnant woman going 800 kilometers on a donkey 100 kilometers on a donkey to run? In the 9th month just a day before delivery and you reach the other end Why do they go to Bethlehem? Because Joseph's relatives are there.

And there is no room. What do you think the average wife would say? Some of your wives you know what they would say. You are all spiritual you won't say that.

But let's take some of those other wives out. Why couldn't you make some arrangement for me? Don't you know I am pregnant? Would you have told in advance to make a room for me? What type of a husband are you? None of you, but some of you. Can you imagine Jesus being born to a woman who is complaining like this about her husband and the baby is going to be born? A 19 year old girl comes no place for delivery.

There is a cow shed with all the animals. Here is a 19 year old girl saying to her husband Joseph is more worried. Don't worry Joseph.

God is in control. God has chosen that I should deliver my baby in a cow shed. That was her attitude and that's why God chose such a woman for the birth of Jesus Christ.

Only such people He chooses today to build the body of Christ. No complaints, whatever God deals with them is okay. All this can be summed up in one statement that Mary said to the angel.

Listen to this sentence and never forget it in all your life. Luke 1.38 Here I am the bond slave of the Lord. Let it be done to me whatever you have planned.

Let it be done to me according to your words or according to your plans. If you have planned to be ashamed in this village no one will believe that I was born in the Holy Spirit. Let it be done to me like that.

You plan that I should deliver in a cow shed with all those dirty cows and donkeys. Let it be done to me like that. You plan that I should travel 90 kilometers on rough road the day before delivering.

On a donkey. If it is to give birth to the body of Christ. Let it be done to me like that.

If God finds people like that today, He will build the body of Christ. It is very difficult for Him to find such people. The whole world is full of people who murmur and complain at the slightest inconvenience.

Where in the world will God build the body of Christ? See Philippians 2. What is the proof that we are children of God? Many people say, I accepted Christ. But listen to this. Philippians 2. Do everything without grumbling and complaining.

Why? Why? Because that is how you prove that you are a child of God. Have you ever read that verse? Somebody asks you, how do you know you are a child of God? Most people say, I accepted Christ 35 years ago. What about giving this answer? How do you know you are a child of God? Now I never murmur or complain about anything.

Once upon a time, I used to murmur and complain about everything. Those days I was not a child of God. Now I know I am a child of God.

Because I don't complain or murmur about anything. I am quoting the scripture that you may prove that you are blameless and innocent children of God. Because the world is full of murmuring and grumbling and complaining.

That makes the world full of darkness. In the midst of this darkness there are some lights. Verse 15.

How are they lights? The world is full of darkness. There are some people who don't murmur or complain. Sometimes when I am travelling in a plane at night over some deserted areas you look down and see one light.

It is all dark. There is one house with the light. If you travel a few miles you will see another house with a light.

It is not a city. It is a desert. There are some lights This is how God sees the world.

This is the world where everybody is complaining and murmuring about something or the other every day. Even Christians go and sing in Sunday morning and they come home and murmur and complain. God sees it all as darkness.

On earth people think it is normal. There are people who live in the slums in absolute filth. We go there and we don't even want to stay five minutes.

It is normal for them. They live there. They sleep there.

The world is full of murmuring complaining and grumbling. It is normal for them. They live in that slum.

But in the midst of it there is a light. One person. One home.

Where there is no murmuring. No complaining. No complaining.

No giving thanks. One light. Then you travel another thousand miles another light.

Not so many. So when God sees the world He sees it like this. Full of darkness.

I am just quoting what is quoted in that scripture. Some lights. Some lights.

Those who do all things without grumbling and complaining. If they complain once in a while the light is gone. But there are some people who do everything without grumbling and complaining.

But there are some people who do everything without grumbling and complaining. Have you seen this verse before? I said yesterday. Tell me.

I never saw this. It was in the Bible all these years. I said because you read so quickly and close the Bible and go on and do something else.

It is better to stop at one verse and meditate on it before you go on. It will change your life. I also read in haste in the olden days.

It never changed my life. But as I began to take scripture seriously but then you see it is so difficult to live without grumbling. That has been my nature from childhood.

I agree. It is a nature of all of us. Including me.

But God changed me. The answer is in verse 13. God is at work in you to make you desire and do what He wants.

What does He want? He wants, verse 14, that you should do everything without grumbling and complaining. And when you say, God says, I know that. That is why I am going to work in you and make

you do it.

He gives the answer in verse 13 before giving the command. I know you will say this is impossible. That is why I tell you in the previous verse, I will do this in you.

What does it mean to will and to work? First of all, I give you a desire. Live a life where you never complain or grumble. I have a feeling God has already given all of you that desire.

Live all your life without grumbling or complaining. Now you have to believe that God will do the second thing also. He will not only make you will, but actually work it out.

God gives me the desire. He gives me the ability. What do I have to do now? I am not a robot.

You know what a robot is? It is programmed with a computer. It is programmed with a computer. If God had made Adam like a robot, I can picture how Adam would be.

He would walk up to the tree of knowledge good and evil. He would walk around somewhere else. He would never sin.

But the program is programmed with a robot. God didn't make man like that. He didn't make you and me like that.

So when he says God will make me will and work, He doesn't make me a robot that I automatically never grumble or complain. I have to cooperate. That's why it says in verse 12, You must work out this salvation with fear and trembling, because God is working inside you.

Salvation from what? Salvation from grumbling and complaining. Have you seen these verses? They are absolutely liberating. Can you imagine what your home will be like if there is not a single day when anyone is grumbling or complaining about anything? Absolutely heaven on earth.

You will always find something good in everything. Maybe one day your wife didn't make breakfast in time for you to go to work. Praise the Lord.

God saw I love food so much He wants me to fast this morning. Thank you so much. I am going to work.

Happy man. Too much salt in the food? Yeah, God sees my blood pressure is going a bit low, He is trying to release the salt. No complaining.

In everything. That is the mark of a spiritual person. A lot of people say, I speak in tongues.

I am not against tongues, I speak in tongues myself. But I also believe God doesn't give it to everybody. God makes one an apostle, another a prophet, another a preacher, another speaking in tongues.

Is everybody an apostle He says? No. Is everybody a prophet? Does everybody have a gift of healing? And do all speak in tongues? That is so clear. And yet there are people who say, that is like saying everybody must be an apostle.

Read 1 Corinthians 12. 28, 29, 30. The answer is there.

So what is the mark of being filled with the spirit? Do you know that in the entire Bible, there is only one verse where there is a command, be filled with the Holy Spirit. The promise is there in Gospels and Acts.

Jesus promised, John the Baptist said, you can be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The command to Christians is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When a person has received Christ, the spirit of Christ comes in. The Holy Spirit has come.

But it is not filled. There is a difference between receiving the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit. If you have not received the spirit, you are not born again.

To receive Christ is to receive the Holy Spirit. Which says in Romans 8, 9. Read it. The last part of verse 9. Let's read the whole thing.

You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in you. The Spirit of God dwells inside you.

That means you have received the Holy Spirit. Read the rest of the verse. If you don't have the Spirit, then you don't even belong to Christ.

You are not even born again. You read it carefully. When does the Spirit come into a person? As soon as he has received Christ.

As soon as he is born again. The Spirit of Christ has come in. Then you say, what is all this thing people are talking about being filled with the Spirit? There is a difference between receiving the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit.

Think of your heart like a house with 10 rooms. You can switch on the lights in one room. You look from the outside.

Is there a light in that house? Yes. Is it filled with light? Nine rooms are dark. There is a difference between receiving the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit.

Does the Holy Spirit want to fill every room? Yes. But why doesn't He fill every room? Because the principle is I knock at the door. If any man opens the door, I will come in.

The Holy Spirit says, can I come into your television room? To determine what all you watch? I watch a few things you may not like. Can I check the books you are reading? No. Forgive my sins.

Can I come and examine how you spend your money? Are you cheating anybody? Are you a miser just holding it all to yourself? Not rich towards God like Jesus said. No, no, no. Don't come there and cheat.

Because it is true, I am a bit of a miser. You come in, I don't need you to tell me to be very generous and help others. Don't come inside.

I am locking these doors and saying, Oh Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit. The Lord says, that is exactly what I am trying to do. Will you lock all the doors? If you lock all the doors, you will not be filled with the Holy Spirit for 100 years.

That is exactly the reason. It is like somebody is knocking at your door and you keep the door locked. Come in, come in. Please come in.

We welcome you. We want you to come. That is what it says.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5. How do you know that you are filled with the Holy Spirit? Ephesians 5. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. And what will happen? You will speak in songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.

You will have a certain praise in your life. Always giving thanks for everything in the name of Jesus Christ. That is how I know I am filled with the Holy Spirit.

And being subject to one another. That means I am not trying to rule over everybody. To me, this is the mark of being filled with the Spirit.

This is the praise in my life, verse 19, that I give thanks for every single thing that happens in my life. And I am willing to take the low position of serving others. If God has done that in your life, you know you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

If He has not done that in your life, whatever experience you think you have, you are not filled with the Holy Spirit. You know how Jesus was born through Mary? Jesus said, the Holy Spirit will come on you. Do you want Christ to be formed in your life? I remember when God filled me with the Holy Spirit.

And the next morning I was seeking God. And the Lord said to me, just like the Spirit of God came on Mary to produce Jesus, the Spirit of God has come upon you to produce Jesus in your life. And I said, wow, that's wonderful.

I mean, I can't produce Jesus, but the Holy Spirit can produce Jesus. A lot of people, they are trying to behave like Jesus. They come to the meeting, and they say, okay, I must do this, I must do this.

So it becomes like a self-improvement program. You know, in these big corporations and all, they get some people to teach executives how to improve your behavior with your workers. They don't love the workers, but for the sake of prosperity in the company, they act in another way.

And to many Christians, that is what a church service is. They must behave like this. They mustn't do this, mustn't do that.

And they try to behave like Jesus. It's imitation. Bible does not speak about imitating Christ.

But not taking up his name. This is very different. Imitating, we can't carry on for long.

You know, nowadays there are people who train dogs in such a way that dogs will obey immediately. Pick up that stick. Pick up that stick.

Keep the juicy food in front of the dog. And tell the dog, don't eat now. The dog's mouth is watering and it doesn't eat.

It's amazing how they train dogs. Now here's a dog being trained. A dog being trained.

Don't say baba, say meow, meow. The dog is trained. Meow, meow.

And so, somebody comes to the house in the other room, they say meow, meow. You've got a nice catch here. It trains so well.

It just says meow, meow, meow. One day on the road, another dog just barks at it and suddenly the old nature comes out. This is how many believers are.

They try and try to imitate Christ for daily on end. And one day something happens on the road or somewhere and the old nature comes right out. That's the problem with imitation.

But this is what's happening in many churches. The dog trainer, the pastor training everybody how to behave. But there is a different way.

Peter speaks about it in 2 Peter 1. He says, the greatest promise God has given us is this. He says there are many magnificent and precious promises in verse 4. And what is the purpose of all these promises? That you might partake of the divine nature. Not that you might imitate Christ, but that you might get his nature.

Only God can do this. If God puts the nature of a cat inside that dog, then nobody has to train it. It will automatically say meow meow even if other dogs jump on it and shout on it, it will still say meow.

Because it's not imitating. It is partaking of another nature. What is a pig and a cat? So different nature.

Pig is so dirty. It's not taught. When a little baby pig is born, your mother doesn't say, now you must be dirty, right? Don't forget, you have to be dirty.

You must not love clandestines, you must love the filth. You must not love clandestines, you must love the filth. It's not taught.

It automatically loves the filth. And when little kittens are born to a cat, mother doesn't say, now don't be like a pig, you must be clean. You lick yourself.

No instruction. It is nature. You understand? We are born partaking of God's nature.

Let's take an example. We were born partaking of Adam's nature. Boy, Adam and nature did a first class job in all of us.

Nobody taught us to be angry. Nobody taught us to tell lies. Nobody taught us to fight.

Nobody taught us to cheat. Nobody taught us to be crooked. Adam's nature did it all.

What a perfect job Adam's nature did to give us his nature. Didn't it do it in all of us? Now do you think when God gives us his nature is going to be inferior to Adam? That as perfectly Adam imparted his nature to us. And made us evil from head to foot.

Even if we behave nicely on the outside. It's all an act. I think of these salesmen who sell shoes in a shoe shop.

Some lady comes. This shoe. That shoe.

That shoe. Up to 25 shoes. The shoe salesman is fed up with this lady.

I smile and say thank you so much for coming. Please come again. He says this devil of a woman.

But what a good actor this salesman is. I am reminded of many Christians. It's imitation.

But we need his nature. God gives us his nature. We are brothers.

Dear brothers. This is the purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit had come to Mary would she have created Jesus Christ? Could she have created Christ in any other way? No.

No matter how much you try, you can't create Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit. I want to say to you.

Many people have done a wonderful job of imitating Christ. You all know Mahatma Gandhi. What a wonderful job he did of imitating Christ.

Buying the wounds of lepers. Going on with a dhoti. Very very simply.

Away from sexual sin. It was on the outside. Divine nature is something completely different.

It's from within. Just like a cat loves to be cleaned. You know the picture of the Holy Spirit as a dove.

Dove does not like dirty places. You know Noah's Ark. The crow went out.

I saw the dead flesh floating around. He says, Wow! What a feast I had. I don't want to go to that rotten old ark anymore.

I never came back. Dove went down and saw the same stuff. He says, I'm hungry but I don't want to touch this.

That's nature. The crow is a picture of the flesh and the dove is a picture of the Holy Spirit. All these are pictures in the Old Testament.

If you go out into the world and you enjoy it, then you know you are in the flesh. If you go out and see these things, you say, I don't want all this. But if you go out into the world and you enjoy it, the Holy Spirit has given you a nature.

You don't envy the people who are living in sin. You feel sorry for them. The dove looks at that crow eating all that rotten flesh and he doesn't say, Wow! He is enjoying that.

He is sorry for that. Eating that rotten stuff. You feel sorry for that.

Nature never makes you feel jealous of somebody. You feel jealous of somebody who is very rich and has got a ten times better car than you. That's like one crow feeling jealous of another crow getting more meat.

Nature does not bother. I don't want that. I want to be pure.

Nature is a wonderful thing. They couldn't have it in the Old Testament. What does the law is improve your character.

The new covenant is nature. So, what I want to say to you is don't be satisfied until nature has taken over. God must bear witness to you.

That's how even the church is born in different places. Here in Singapore also, about 30 years ago, we tried to start a church. I came to a Chinese assembly there.

There were some young people who were really interested. Some good Chinese young brothers. I had a few conferences with them also.

But they got attracted by other things. Foreign trips. Wanted to have nothing more to do with it.

I said goodbye. God bless you. I have no desire to build a church anywhere in the world.

If God wants to do it, let him do it. If he doesn't do it, that's fine. I don't have places to go.

So, in these 30 years, I have traveled many other places. I got married in different churches. Last year, I suddenly had a burden.

I said, let's try Singapore again. I didn't know what God would do. Because for so many years, nothing happened here.

Somehow, God did something. There was not any brother. It was God.

Praise the Lord. God has chosen to be a little fellowship here. A light that shines for God.

It's not how many people there are. You see these street lights, a small powerful sodium vapor lamp. It gives light to the whole street.

It's not the size of the bulb. It's the power. Why did Jesus say you are like salt? How much salt do you put in your whole plate of rice? Jesus was emphasizing quality.

You don't need a bucket full of salt. There is no savor, Jesus said. Even a bucket will not change the taste.

Strong salt, the few bits of it is enough. The other picture, he said, you are the light. How much space does a bulb take in a room? Such a small space in the room.

It gives light to the whole room. It's not size, it's power. Two examples Jesus used.

Salt and light. One message. It's not size.

Power. Nature. It's the nature of salt to make something salt.

Nature of light to drive out darkness. God's nature. That's what we need to see.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it's God's nature. That's why I say it's a foolish man who keeps his TV room locked up and his library locked up and his financial thing locked up. I'm trying to behave in a Christian way on the outside.

It's exactly like a dog saying meow. You can fool others, but one day in a time of temptation you will see you have not changed. I want every part of my life to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I want to do my small part to build the body of Christ. That's what we testify to in the breaking of bread. When we take part in the bread with all of us, it's the way in which Jesus said you are all one.

You are committed to each other. When we drink the cup, there's a sense of equality. I may be more spiritual than many of you, but I don't drink a bigger cup than all of you.

Same size. The same blood of Christ that cleanses me with Christ's blood. There's a sense of equality when we break bread together.

We are committed to one another and we are equal before Christ. Even though there are different gifts, at the same time there's a humility. I hope they will be there when you break bread.

Lord, I don't deserve that you should come all the way from heaven to die for me. I've seen people come to the breaking of bread with such pride. They deserve something.

I've been breaking bread for 57 years. Even today I come and say, Lord, I don't deserve it one bit. I come without any sense of deserving itself.

Just God's giving. Lord, everything you've given me is a gift. I don't deserve it.

Every day I eat the bread and the juice. I'm not everything. I'm a part of the body, Lord.

I'm not a big piece of bread. I take a small portion from everyone. I remember hearing a story of one church where an elder was very proud of trying to take a lot of importance in the church.

And making everybody else feel small. One smart brother decided to teach him a lesson once. When they were breaking bread, the elder brought the bread around.

He took about three quarters of the bread and started eating. He looked at him sternly. He couldn't say anything and moved on.

After the meeting, he said, Why did you take such a lot? He said, Brother, I just teach you. Don't become so big in the church. We are all brothers.

Don't think one is more important than the other. That's a good way to learn humility. I eat the same small piece that everybody else eats.

I may not have any gifts. But when it comes to Christ, we are all sinners. And we belong to one another.

I hope you will realize that. We are going to pray now. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, it's not only that you died for our sins on the cross. You defeated Satan. You conquered death.

All our enemies have been defeated. The things we feared on earth are gone. Death has no fear for us.

Satan cannot harm us. You have made us victors. Because you rose from the dead.

And we partake in your resurrection. We want to live by that resurrection power. Partaking of your nature.

And we want to commit ourselves afresh today to build the body of Christ in our local town. And each one of us to do our small part. Thank you Father for hearing us.

Thank you for the fellowship you brought us into. Help us to have a spirit of loneliness to serve one another. Help each of us to have a spirit of washing other people's feet.

Because that's what you did on the last Sabbath. Give us all a willingness Lord to wash the other brother's sister's feet. And have that spirit till the end of our life.

Pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-new-covenant-life-and-church-part-3/>

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