

The Shallowness in Some Christians

by Zac Poonen

The speaker emphasizes the importance of discipleship and studying God's Word to experience the fullness of salvation and live a life that follows Jesus.

Duration: 1:00:03

Scripture: Mark 16:15

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of not just accepting salvation but also living a life of discipleship, following Jesus completely. It highlights the shallowness in the lives of many Christians and the need to go beyond conversion to true discipleship. The speaker shares personal experiences of serving the Lord and challenges listeners to seek a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform their lives.

Transcript

Praise the Lord, it's a great opportunity again to be with you all. I'm very thankful that I've been invited back here by Pastor Weaver and by the persistence of Herman during the last two years. One of the things that I have been burdened about is I've looked at Christianity around the world is the shallowness of the lives of most Christians.

Just to tell you a little bit about myself, I'm 75 years old, I was converted 55 years ago when I was an officer in the Indian Navy and I had my ambitions there, but when I was 26, the Lord called me to quit my job and for nearly 50 years now I've been serving the Lord, mostly in India, and most of the last 40 years has been in planting new churches in many parts of India, towns, villages, etc., and the Lord's blessed our labors and we've been greatly encouraged as we've seen people not only turn to Christ, but understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Our burden has been not just to make converts, but to make disciples. If you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 3, we read a little expression there in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 3 called, so great a salvation.

Our salvation is described as a great salvation and it said here, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Now, I presume that most, if not all of you, have not rejected this great salvation. There's a difference between rejecting and neglecting. Rejecting means, I don't want this.

Neglecting means God's given you something very precious and you neglect it. It's like a very precious field of service that is neglected and we need to ask ourselves whether we have neglected such a great salvation and I think most Christians have. And the reason doesn't lie entirely with believers themselves, I think a lot of the failure is due to the teachers who have taught them an incomplete salvation.

It's like in a school, a particular class, if most of the students fail, it's more than likely that the problem is not with the students, but with the teacher. He's not a good teacher. So when Jesus gave what is known as the great commission to his disciples to go up to heaven, he said first of all, I want to show you two verses which I believe constitute the great commission.

One is Mark 16 and verse 15, go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved. He who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

So that's mostly what people call evangelism today concentrates on this. Going out into the unreached areas of the world and seeking to lead people to believe that they are sinners, they need to turn from their sin and trust Christ who took the penalty for all their sins on the cross, Christ who rose again and is living. And it stops there and go on to baptism, of course.

And then thereafter, the desire becomes to get one more person to that place and then another and another and another. So we get a whole lot of converts who have accepted Christ as their savior, their sins are forgiven, they're baptized, and they consider themselves saved. But this is only one side of a great commission and like a currency note, if only one side is printed, it's a counterfeit or a coin.

There are two sides to it. The other side is what has been left out by most Christians. And that's found in Matthew 28, verse 18.

This is the other side of the great commission. Remember the first was, go into all the world, preach the gospel to all people, and he who believes and is baptized will be saved, he who doesn't believe will be condemned. But here, the Lord gives something more.

He says in verse 19, go and make disciples. Now, a disciple is a learner and a follower. If a person is not following Jesus, you cannot say he's a disciple.

There is a narrow gate and a narrow way, Jesus said, that leads to life. It's not just a narrow gate. He didn't say there's a narrow gate that leads to life.

He said there's a narrow gate and a narrow way that leads to life. There is a crisis of conversion followed by a process of following Jesus. This is what Jesus said leads to life.

So make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we still haven't finished. Teach them to do everything that I commanded you.

So when we have completed that, we can say we have completed both sides of the Great Commission. So we first bring that person to faith in Christ for his forgiveness of his sins, and then teach him what it means to follow Jesus Christ. And then once he's responded to that call to become a disciple, we have to teach him, according to this verse, every single thing that Jesus commanded.

We have to teach him, for example, that if he lusts after a woman, that's adultery. That anger in the heart, if it's permitted to remain, is equal to murder. That it's not enough to love his friends, he must love his

enemies.

That whenever he prays or gives or fasts, he must do it in secret, not tell anybody about it. I'm just mentioning certain things found in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, the Sermon on the Mount, that he should not judge anybody. And that he should not be anxious, but trust his Heavenly Father to provide for all his needs.

That's Matthew 6. So these are some of the things that Jesus taught. That every word that he speaks, he'll have to give an account in the day of judgment. So when you look at Christians around the world, you ask yourself, are they really being taught all these things? Do they hear all these things? And very often the answer is no.

They've not rejected the salvation. They've neglected it. And it's to such people who are doing this, going, making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Now I've seen that last part of that statement in many homes. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. But I say, hey, that's the last part of a long sentence.

You're trying to claim a promise without fulfilling the condition. There's a condition to that promise, lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age. And that condition is, go and make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teach them to do all that I commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

I'm not saying that the Lord is not near you, but this is a special promise given, especially to those who are seeking to make disciples. And teaching people, teaching those disciples, to obey every single thing that Jesus commanded. There we see the tremendous limitation.

In my own country, when I left the Navy in 1966, I spent nine years traveling all across India, north to south, east to west. Most of the states I traveled, looking at Christian churches, Christian missions that had been founded there for many years. And many of those godly missionaries who came in the past, when I look at the result of their work, 70, 80, 90 years later, it's very shallow.

Even though they did a wonderful work then. And I see the failure, most cases, is that discipleship is not being preached. And that is why we don't experience the fullness of salvation that the apostles experienced.

When Jesus spoke about John the Baptist, he made this statement in Matthew chapter 11. Now the reason I quote scripture so much is because, like Paul said, I don't want your faith to rest on the wisdom of men, but on the word of God. My words are unimportant, just like yours.

The word of God, Jesus said, heaven and earth will pass away, but his word will never pass away. Faith comes not by hearing clever men, persuasive men, emotional men. Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ.

So that's why I quote scripture. In all my sermons, I quote scripture extensively, so that even if you don't look at a Bible immediately, I hope you will listen to the message sometime later and compare it with scripture. It says about the Berean Christians in Acts 17, that even when the apostle Paul preached, they, as it were, told him, well, brother Paul, thank you for your message, but we check up the scriptures and come back next week and tell you whether we agree with you or not.

Isn't that a wonderful attitude? Do you know the result of that? The result is that there is no epistle to the Bereans. There is an epistle to the Corinthians, correcting the errors there. There is an epistle to the Galatians, correcting the errors there.

There is an epistle to the Philippians, sorting out the problems there in the Colossians, but no epistle to the Bereans. Why is that? Because they had the habit of checking every preacher's message with the word of God. A wonderful habit to have.

And that's why they were always safe. It's a safe attitude to have. So let me turn you to Matthew 11, where Jesus spoke about John the Baptist.

It says here in Matthew 11, verse 11, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, among all those born of women, there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist. He was even greater than Mary, the mother of Jesus. I wonder if my Roman Catholic friends realize that, that Jesus himself said, that the greatest person born of women was not Mary, it was John the Baptist.

But he said, this is the important thing, the least person who comes into the kingdom of heaven is greater than him. That means the potential in this person who is born again and enters into God's kingdom, is far higher than the height to which John the Baptist could reach under the old covenant. John the Baptist was the greatest prophet under the old covenant.

But under the new covenant, which he calls the kingdom of heaven here, we can rise higher. The least person can rise higher than John the Baptist. In what way? Not that everybody would be a prophet like John the Baptist, but that we could come to a higher inner life partaking of God's own nature, which even John the Baptist could not have.

That we can have rivers of living water flowing from our innermost being, which even John the Baptist could not have. In John chapter 7, Jesus spoke about that. He said in John chapter 7, he described the fullness of salvation like this, he who believes in me.

Now, many people know John 6.47, he who believes in me has eternal life. Okay, that's great. John 6.47, he who believes has eternal life.

But is there anything further for those who believe? Yes. The next chapter, John 7, verse 38, he who believes in me, it's the same condition, no extra condition, as John 6.47, he who believes in me, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. And this he spoke about the Holy Spirit, which those who believed in him would receive.

Because the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. So a careful student of Scripture, reading that verse will say, how is that the Spirit was not yet given? You see, I see many instances in the Old Testament where the Spirit came upon people. The Spirit clothed Gideon, it says in Judges chapter 6. The Spirit came upon David when Samuel anointed him.

A double portion of the Spirit came on Elisha, which Elijah had. And there were many prophets who said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Isaiah said that.

The difference is this. If I were to take an empty glass here and put a lid on it, and if I were to pour water on it, not one drop would go inside the glass. The inside of the glass could be filthy.

But this pure water would flow, because it's covered with a lid, flow over the lid, and flow like rivers in many directions, bless thousands of people. This is how the Spirit was upon people in Old Testament times. That's why you could have a glass like Samson, whose heart was absolutely filthy with adultery, but the Spirit was upon him and could flow and bless many people.

And the Old Testament prophets were like that. Even John the Baptist, who the Spirit was upon him from the time he was born. It was upon him, not inside.

And blessed thousands of people in his time. But that man, when he was locked up in prison, and the Lord did not release him from prison, he began to doubt. Unbelief came into his heart just because he was facing persecution, just for a few days.

He even began to doubt whether Jesus was the Messiah. He had seen the dove descend upon him. He had heard the voice from heaven, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

And yet from prison, he sends messengers to Jesus in Matthew 11 saying, Are you really the Messiah? Or do we have to wait for someone else? You see, this greatest prophet doubted Jesus, even though he had seen. That's how it was under the Old Covenant when the Spirit is not within. That's why Jesus said, the least person who enters into this New Covenant life will rise higher than even John the Baptist.

What happened on the day of Pentecost was that lid was removed. Or we could use another illustration. In the Old Testament, there was a tabernacle which had three parts.

Outer court, holy place, most holy place, corresponding to man's body, soul, and spirit. The spirit is the heart. Between the holy place and the most holy place was a thick veil.

That's similar to this lid on top of the glass I spoke about. A veil that blocked off man's heart or spirit so that man could not enter into communion with God. And God could not enter into man's spirit.

But when Jesus died on the cross, that veil was rent. Symbolizing not only the way right into God's presence was open, but also that God could enter now that innermost part of man which was now open because the veil was rent. And now the spirit could come within because man's heart was now cleansed in the blood of Christ.

The reason why the spirit could not dwell in any Old Testament believer was their hearts were dirty. No amount of blood of bulls and goats would cleanse their sin. And the spirit would not enter a dirty heart.

But when Christ came and the veil was rent and He had atoned for the sins of humanity, then anyone who received Him and had his heart cleansed, the cup was now clean. Then the spirit, once the cup is clean, cleansed by the blood of Christ, the only way it can be cleansed, the spirit could come within. And that's what He says here.

When He says the spirit was not yet given, that's the meaning. Because in the previous verse He said, now from His innermost being the rivers will flow. Formerly the rivers flowed from over Him.

But now it would flow from His innermost being. The inside of the heart would be filled first and then it would overflow. The heart would be cleansed and it wouldn't be like Samson or even like John the Baptist.

It would be from within. It would flow out. And in this way, the spirit was not yet given.

Because Jesus was not yet glorified. I find many believers when they come across some difficult verses like that, they tend to just ignore it and move on. That way we will never understand scripture.

And we can miss out on some rich treasures. I wonder whether you have noticed what I've shared with you right now. It's quite likely that a number of you have never noticed this and yet it's been there in your Bible all these years that you've read it.

That's just one little treasure among many, many, many things that I've discovered in scripture as I've learned to read it slowly and ask for the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Because I believe there's only one book among all the billions of books there are in the world that God gave for man. Only one.

And anyone who really believes, I don't mean intellectually agree. A lot of people intellectually agree but they don't believe in their heart. But if they really believe in their heart that Almighty God wrote only one book for man to read and to be guided by, I'm amazed that so many Christians who believe that don't read and study this one book.

It's one of the things I decided when I took my baptism about 54 years ago and one of the first things I began to do after my baptism was to study God's Word. While I was working on a ship and I would spend all my spare time studying God's Word and that's how I came to know the scriptures. And through the years I've been studying the Bible 54 years now and I've discovered new things even now.

It's like a well that never runs dry. And I want to say to you dear brothers and sisters, if you neglect the Word you will neglect this great salvation. That is the number one reason why people who have not rejected the salvation have neglected it.

Therefore they have missed out on something God wants you to have. Think of if your father was not a billionaire but a multi-billionaire and think if you were the only son or daughter and your dad wrote a will describing where all his money is stored in which all banks and in where all which all cities and countries he has property and he wills it all to you maybe it's four or five pages, the will. I want to ask you would you read it carefully? Is there a single person sitting here who would not read that will carefully? We would all read it because money means a lot.

What about God? Does he mean less to us than money? One of the things I decided, you know like every human being we all love money. We have a lot of beggars and tramps in India I've never met a beggar or tramp who doesn't love money. Every rich man loves money.

There's not a human being who doesn't love money. But Jesus said that the love of money can hinder our love for God. We can have money but we must treat money like a servant.

Money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master and unfortunately it has become a master for many Christians that money means more to them than God. That's why they would study a will written by a rich father more carefully than they read God's word because they say reading that will I can acquire all the property that my dad left for me. Reading the Bible what do I get? Spiritual riches.

Do they mean something to you? Would you let some crooked lawyer cheat you of your inheritance? No. If you feel that a crooked lawyer is trying to cheat you out of your inheritance you take that will to another lawyer and say please read this and tell me what I'm entitled to. But the devil has cheated many many Christians of their inheritance.

Let me give you a little glimpse of what we have missed out. The apostle Paul was the second person in the Bible who said follow me. Some people say it's wrong to follow a man.

How can it be wrong when the Holy Spirit himself writes, tells Paul to write follow me. Do you know that Paul said that in 1 Corinthians 11? Be imitators of me. Follow me as I am of Christ.

Jesus was the first person in the Bible who said follow me. No man in the Old Testament ever could dare to say follow me. They could say listen to me.

Hear me. I'm preaching God's word and they preached God's word accurately. But not one of them could point to their life and say follow me.

Jesus was the first. But he was not the last. Paul said follow me.

Verse 1. As I follow Christ. And the picture I get is of a perfection. It's a mountain top like Mount Everest.

30,000 feet. And Jesus is at the top. Perfect.

He lived on earth a perfect life. What Paul did was look for the footsteps of Jesus. How did he live? I want to live like him.

He told me to follow him. Jesus never said admire me. Nowhere in scripture did Jesus say admire me, admire me.

And yet most Christians are admiring Jesus. We never told them to do. We can worship him.

That's fine. But more than anything else he said follow me. Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

If any man wants to follow me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9.23. So Paul took that seriously. And he decided to follow Jesus and he in pressing on to perfection he found the footsteps of Jesus, the principles by which he lived and he lived in those principles and he doesn't say just follow me.

He says I'm following Christ by the way. And you fellas if you can't see clearly the way Christ walked, look at me. You know it's like if you, there's some man who's reached the top of the mountain and I can't see him because he's so far away.

I'm happy to see somebody else who I'm sure is walking in those same footsteps and I can follow him. And in Philippians 3 Paul says further he says not only me Philippians 3.17 He again says the same thing. Brethren join in following my example.

So don't think it's such a bad thing to follow a man if he's a godly man. There are very few whose lives we can really follow because many Christians, their private life does not correspond to their public life. Then of course you can't follow them.

Or there are many things in their life which they may be born again but it's not a good testimony. Maybe they lose their temper frequently. Maybe they are frequently anxious, worried, tense.

They can't seem to trust a heavenly father to take care of all their needs. We can't follow such people. We love them as fellow believers but we can't follow such people.

But there are a few. And I thank God that in my life I've come across a very very few godly men whom I could follow in my younger days that helped me tremendously. Not just the scriptures but godly men who could show by their life that it was possible to live this life described in the New Testament.

Because very often you know an example is worth a thousand words. I mean it's no use somebody proving on a blackboard, on a board the theory of swimming and proving to you that swimming is possible. It's far easier if a man takes you to the swimming pool and sees how I go across.

Gravity is pulling me down but I still go across this water. That challenges me more to believe that swimming is possible than if somebody convinces me through some theory. So it's like that.

People can preach so many theories from the pulpit but if you see one life of a man who manifests the characteristics of Christ, particularly his humility and particularly his freedom and money and his patience and goodness and compassion. That's a man worth following. So Paul says follow my example and he says observe others who walk according to the same pattern that you have in us.

He says it's not just me. There are a few godly men. Of course you can't follow people like Demas who forsook Paul and was once a co-worker of Paul but forsook him following the world.

Paul wouldn't encourage you to follow him but he says there are a few. In fact earlier on in Philippians 2 he says among my co-workers right now he says in Philippians 2.20 I have no one but Timothy. Imagine among Paul's co-workers.

I mean if you got into Paul's team that itself was a great honor. But Paul says to the Philippians, I want to send Timothy to you. Philippians 2.19 because among my present co-workers who are with me there's not even one like him who is genuinely concerned for your welfare just like Jesus was genuinely concerned for people.

Here was a young man, Timothy who like Paul was genuinely concerned for others. Where did he learn that from? Paul. And one, verse 21, who did not seek after his own interest where did he learn not to seek after his own interest but that of Christ Jesus? From Paul.

So here was Paul and here was a Timothy following in Paul's footsteps. So it is not just Paul. And so the challenge that comes to us my dear brothers and sisters is that we should be men and women like that.

Even if you have climbed only 500 feet up this 30,000 feet mountain. We're still a long way. Paul may be at 5,000 feet okay.

I'm way behind him. I've climbed only 500 feet. I can turn around and people are only at 100 feet and say hey, follow me.

As I follow Paul and Timothy and as they follow Christ. This is how we are to be witnesses of Christ. There's a lot of difference between bearing witness for Christ and being a witness for Christ.

You know the difference between bearing witness and being a witness? Bearing witness is by our words. I bear witness to Christ saying he died for the sins of the world. He rose again.

He ascended. He's coming back. That's bearing witness, a true witness.

Being a witness means more than that. It includes the words but it includes a life that backs up those words. When Jesus spoke about the coming of the Holy Spirit, you know this is the distinctive feature of the new covenant.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit within. Not upon but within. Where my heart gets cleaned up and filled up and then I overflow in blessing to thousands.

Rivers of living water. You know rivers are always meant for other people to drink. Do you know that if you believe in Jesus, God's will is John 7 38 he or she who believes in me.

Does that include you? He or she who believes in me. Let's stop there. John 7 38.

Does that include you? If it does, then see what the rest of the verse says. Out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water. It may start like a trickle as the scripture has said.

When you go to the Old Testament scripture and say where does it say in scripture that rivers of living water will flow? It says that in Ezekiel 47. In Ezekiel 47 the Lord gave Ezekiel a vision and in that vision he saw a house which is a picture of the house of God now today representing our body and he says from underneath the outer of the house the water, the last part of verse 2, Ezekiel 47 2 water began to trickle from the south side. It wasn't a river, just a little trickle and that's how our life in the spirit begins.

Life in the fullness of the Holy Spirit begins as a trickle and the man led me further and then the water reached up to my ankles it was no longer a trickle now the water had reached to my ankles then a little more and the water reached up to my knees, verse 4 and then a little more and the water reached up to my loins and a little more and the water was high enough that it was like a river I had to swim in and my feet were taken off the earth and I was carried along by the river and it says further on everywhere the river comes on one side and the other, verse 12 the fruit of every kind and wherever the river comes verse 9, life comes.

This is what Jesus quoted in John 7, 28 as the scripture has said it doesn't begin like a river but don't despise the trickle, don't despise the day of small beginnings.

Well let it flow, keep the channel clear keep your conscience always clear keep the hunger and thirst for Jesus constant and little by little by little it can become a river that blesses thousands and thousands of people the apostle Paul was a human being just like the rest of us, he had the same flesh like us, he committed worse sins than most of us because he persecuted Christians seeking to kill them he supported the murder of Stephen we were not so bad in our unconverted days and yet God took that man because he was so sincere turned him around completely ignored the first 30 years of his life where he messed up going in the wrong direction and turned him around and in the next 37 years before he died at the age of 67 or so God made rivers flow in so many directions that are flowing

till today through his letters think if you take one man Paul out of the bible how much is left think that God could use one man, the influence of one man is it possible that you and I can be like that why not brother sister according to your faith be it unto you we limit God by neglecting our salvation by limiting what God can do to us we sit back and say oh no no no I'm nobody but God uses nobodies if you really believe you're a nobody you'll cling to God and say Lord I'm nothing but you can do a work through me you took unlearned Peter and different people and unlearned fishermen and what a work you did through them that's lasted 2000 years we must have faith to rise up to all that God has for us Jesus said in Acts 1 verse

8 when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and fills you from

within that's what he meant because on the day of Pentecost it was not just upon but from within it came out you shall be BE not BEAR you shall be my witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth in other words your life will bear witness to me and your words will bear witness to me that's what being a witness means and that's why in the old covenant nobody could be a witness they could bear witness the greatest prophets including John the Baptist could bear witness he couldn't say follow me because I lost faith in the Messiah when I was in prison just because he didn't deliver me from prison I lost faith in him but today we know Christians have been in prison for years 25 years in a communist prison and they still hold on to their faith they're greater than John the Baptist they never

lost their faith in Christ just because John the Baptist was in prison just a few days before he lost his faith he thought if I have faith I'll always be delivered from prison so we find that we have wonderful examples in our lifetime of people who were witnesses they were like Jesus said you will be my witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth the work of God cannot be done by just one or two people but imagine if all of us sitting here decided that our heart is going to be totally given over to God totally do you think that would be a good thing or a bad thing that would be the best possible life you can ever live Jesus said at the end of his life in John 17 verse 4 I have finished father I have finished the work you gave me to do the apostle Paul even though he had messed up his

life for 30 years could say at the end of his life out of his 67 years he lived 30 years for the devil ignorant 37 years he lived totally for God and yet he could say in 2 Timothy 4 7 I have finished the course appointed for me you say well how can a man finish the course when he has messed up 30 years of his life well God makes allowance for the years of a person's ignorance some of you may look back over many years that you have neglected the salvation not rejected it but you have been like a student who is always in the first grade always in grade 1 you learnt your ABC you learnt addition and division subtraction but never made much progress beyond that how many of you would like your children just to learn the alphabet just to learn addition and subtraction and say that's it don't you

want your children to progress go higher and higher wouldn't you be disappointed if you had a child that's always failing in grade 1 of course he gets 100% grade 1 but he is never progressing beyond that that's how God looks at a lot of his children who are just satisfied with ABC my sins are forgiven I'm on my way to heaven is that all Paul said to the Corinthians you're like babes yeah I'm not saying you're not born again but you're babies he says I cannot speak to you like I could speak to others who are more mature I cannot feed you with meat you know you don't put meat into the mouth of a 3 month old child it will choke and die so you feed that child with milk so Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 I fed you with milk 1 Corinthians 3 verse 2 because you're babies but how long they were

babies Paul himself was in Corinth for one and a half years preaching to them and he's writing this letter much after that they should have been young men by now he says later on in chapter 14 he said you should be men by now mature in your understanding but you're babes and I believe that is the condition of many many a Christian they seem to be satisfied with my sins are all forgiven and I'm going to heaven they've not rejected the salvation but they've certainly neglected it and so they're not really the type of witnesses that they should be I've often thought of a defeated Christian who knows the forgiveness of sins he knows that Jesus can forgive him but he doesn't seem to overcome sins that plague him day after day after day sins of attitude and sins of thoughts and motives and sins

in speech and sometimes sins in unrighteousness and money matters and yet they would come regularly to church and sing the songs and assume that they are wonderful Christians are they I think if I'm witnessing to a non-Christian see a person who doesn't know anything about Christ and I tell him about this wonderful way of salvation I say listen you've committed a lot of sins in your life like I have right everyone will admit their conscience will tell them they've sinned and I tell him listen I can tell you how I got all my sins forgiven you don't have to live with the guilt of that sin anymore Jesus Christ came from heaven the son of God became a man and died on the cross to take the price paid the price for all your sins and he rose again proving that he's the son of God will you

receive him and you can believe in him receive him and you can be forgiven this moment you don't have to do a single work for it and he says really I say I've experienced it so okay I'll do that but then he tells me he says Zach I've got another problem I'm losing my temper always at my wife can this Jesus of yours deliver me from that and you haven't got that victory yourself then you have to be honest and say listen Jesus can't help you and all those things but if you lose your temper just ask him to forgive you he'll forgive you and you'll lose your temper again the next day and he'll forgive you and you'll keep on losing your temper all your life but he'll forgive you he will say I don't want this Jesus of yours you keep it I'm looking for a savior who will not only forgive me but

save me from my sins he's looking not for a forgiver but a savior you say you're offering a savior but you're only offering a forgiver that's the tragedy of a lot of Christian witness and so I say many many non-Christians they've not rejected Christ they've not rejected this wonderful savior and lord of ours they've rejected a Christ whom they have seen in Christians and that is not the real Christ that's a counterfeit Christ because people like Paul they presented a real Christ let me read you a few verses of how Paul speaks about his own life first of all in 2nd Corinthians in chapter 2 and verse 15 he speaks about being a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and he speaks about the aroma of life in the next verse you know there's an aroma that comes from your life

a spiritual aroma that comes from your life it's like when a heavily perfumed lady walks by even if you're sitting a distance away you get it the perfume the aroma of Christ is to be something like that it's wonderful to see Christians like that who are so gracious and humble and loving and concerned and helpful this is an aroma of Christ because that's how he was and he says here in verse 14 preceding this aroma this is how the aroma comes he speaks of the aroma and the fragrance of Christ in verse 15 and 16 and this is how this fragrance comes in verse 14 thanks be to God he says in 2 Corinthians 2:14 who always and the definitive word here is always and always means 24/7 24 hours a day 7 days a week thanks be to God who 24 hours a day 7 days a week leads me in victory in his victory in

Christ and thus manifests this sweet aroma of the knowledge of him through me in every place I go let me say to you dear brothers and sisters as I say to myself this is what it means to be a witness for Christ not bear witness to be a witness for Christ where I allow God it says it's God who does it it's not me struggling and trying to live a pure life that is life under the law you always say life under the law is man struggling to please God and life under grace is where God does the work in me and makes me live like him so he says thanks be to God let's read slowly 2 Corinthians 2:14 thanks be to God who does this it's not me thanks be to God who leads me in triumph he's not saying well thank God I've been walking in triumph 24/7 for the last so many years no it's not any empty boast

like that thanks be to God who leads me in triumph in Christ in every situation and thereby manifests through me the sweet aroma of the knowledge of God that this is the God I worship that through my life

others get a knowledge of God this is the God really this is the God that Paul worships look what he's done in his life and there we can see what a poor witness the lives of many Christians are when Paul was in prison in Rome he was in prison more than once one of the letters he wrote was Philippians in Philippians he speaks about in 1:13 this is how we know he's in prison when he wrote it my imprisonment in Christ has become well known through the praetorian guard and lying in that prison and remember those Roman prisons were dungeons they were not prisons like today with comfortable

beds and a shower and a restroom and etc no they were dungeons dug into the ground somewhere and with cockroaches and rats running around it was a filthy place in fact Paul shivered there so much once that he didn't even have a blanket to cover himself that he wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 please bring that cloak which I left behind why did he want it he was shivering in the prison but he writes to the Philippians in prison beloved brethren chapter 4 verse 4 rejoice in the Lord always 24/7 again I say rejoice he was doing it himself he wasn't sitting in a comfortable chair or couch and writing this he was in a filthy prison with not knowing when he would be released and he said how are you feeling Paul well I'm rejoicing all the time how could he do that God was producing through him

the sweet aroma of Christ you know that different people were getting converted because at the end of chapter 4 in verse 22 he says the saints here greet you and who are some of those saints those in Caesars house those are some of the praetorian guard who were chained to Paul's hand and keeping this prisoner and I can imagine how when Paul was chained to this Roman soldier he had to be chained to for 8 hours and he talked to him and said hey are you happy in your life and started a conversation and here he had a captive audience that couldn't run away for 8 hours he could give him the gospel explain everything to him and the guy got converted and by the time he got converted it was time for him to go the next fellow would come to take over and he asked him hey are you happy with your

life don't you feel your conscience troubles you about some things not all were converted but some of them were and he was I mean if he was grumbling and complaining and miserable over there nobody would have wanted his Christ but they saw the radiance of Christ in this man locked up in prison unjustly and no complaints against anyone rejoicing in the Lord all the time and so he says the saints in Caesars family know that was through the power of the Holy Spirit it's a wonderful thing my brothers and sisters to open up our being to the Holy Spirit to fill us I'm not a Pentecostal but I believe in being filled with the Holy Spirit I've never been a member of a Pentecostal church but I believe in the Holy Spirit controlling every part of my innermost being to manifest Christ that is to give

me power to be a witness for Christ and that's what Paul was he was a spirit filled prisoner there and it's not just that he goes on to say verse 6 now remember this is the man sitting in prison doesn't know when he's going to be released doesn't know whether he's going to be beheaded in a few days he says be anxious for nothing again this is not some preacher sitting on a couch preparing a sermon he's locked up in a Roman jail in filthy circumstances shivering and he says be anxious for nothing nothing means zero you say Paul is that really true in your life?

He says yes by prayer and supplications by specific request with thanksgiving thanking God that he's heard our prayer let your request be made known to God and the peace of God even if you're in a Roman prison will God your heart and mind and the meaning there is like a military garrison surrounding your heart keep you in peace and then further this is all a man writing in prison Philippians 4 in the middle I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I'm in I know how to get along with the little or much because I can do everything through him who strengthens me I'm just giving you a little description a few

verses where Paul gives his testimony in difficult circumstances the type of Christianity he manifested he was a witness for Christ and such a man could say follow me as I

follow Christ look carefully at the example of such people these are the ones who not only did not neglect did not reject but they did not neglect so this is the example I want to lift up before all of you say to you as I say to myself I remember for many years in my own life I never took these verses seriously like most Christians I would read them I was a defeated Christian for many years after I was born again to be exact 16 years I could not say these verses were true in my life when I came to a place in my life where I was absolutely fed up I said Lord this is not the way to go this is not true Christianity I'm missing out on something there's something that my father has written in his will for me as an inheritance I haven't got it there's something the devil has cheated me of I

want it I don't want any old devil to cheat me of what Christ purchased for me at such a tremendous price on the cross and the Lord allowed me to fail and fail and fail and fail you know sometimes we have to fail a lot before we become desperate and I had to fail for a number of years not externally I wasn't committing adultery or stealing or doing my external testimony is very good everybody thought I was a wonderful Christian only I knew that I was a hypocrite my inner life did not correspond to my outer life so my desperate prayer to God was one thing I said Lord I'm not asking for any supernatural gift of healing or miracles or any such thing I'm asking you only for one thing that my inner life will correspond with my outward testimony what I testify to should be true in my inner life

just do that for me and I won't ask you for anything else and finally when I hit rock bottom the Lord met with me and filled me with the Holy Spirit which I don't believe is a once for all experience it must be a continuous fullness of the Holy Spirit day by day by day about 40 years ago that completely changed the direction of my life and I began to experience some of these things which I read in scripture not all of a sudden but little by little I began to come out of that pit and started climbing this mountain so I want to say that there was a reason I think when that happened because Jesus said come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden Matthew 11 28 I will give you rest, rest means a life of victory and I paraphrase that as come to me those of you who are sick and tired of your

defeated life I'll bring you to victory many people are not sick and tired of their defeated life they are quite content that they are occasionally defeated here defeated there, a bad thought here an occasional watching pornography here they seem to be quite happy because they say oh the blood of Jesus cleanses me they treat the blood of Christ like tap water, oh my hand got a little dirty, never mind there's water here, there's soap, I can wash it off I don't believe such people will ever come to a life of victory they treat the blood of Christ like it says in Hebrews 10 29 as a cheap thing it's not a cheap thing God has to allow us to fail and fail and fail and fail and fail like the disciples who went fishing, they fail and fail and fail and fail and fail the whole night now the Lord

knew they'd fail, why didn't he come early? why didn't he come earlier? why didn't he come at 10 o'clock at night? why did he wait till 5 o'clock in the morning before he appeared to them in John 21 because they had not hit rock bottom, they hadn't given up all hope they thought yeah a little more effort and I'll make it and I think some people are seeking for a life of victory like that just a little more effort, I'll grit my teeth a little and I'll make it next year, no you won't all your new year resolutions don't go past the 10th or 15th of January, you know that that's about it no it's not that, it's when we hit rock bottom and say Lord I cannot make it, I want you to fill me give me that inner power to live this life so that I can follow in the footsteps of Paul and Christ and at

least be an example to a few others, that little by little trickle of water will come out of me to bless others, even though I've messed up so many years of my life so far one closing verse before I finish Acts of the Apostles in chapter 10 in Acts chapter 10 I'm sorry I'm sorry, Acts 17 Acts of the Apostles chapter 17 and verse 30 this is a verse to encourage those who feel I've wasted so many years of my life Lord is there any hope for me this is for you this verse especially remember it Acts 17 verse 30 it's talking about God having overlooked the times of your ignorance that is all the years when you were ignorant to the truth that you heard today, the possibility of a life in Christ of overcoming having God overlooks the years of ignorance where you messed up your life now God is

declaring turn around, repent means turn around isn't that wonderful when God met with Paul on the Damascus road, Saul of Tarsus he overlooked all those 30 years of ignorance and said never mind Saul, don't get discouraged turn around now, I can do something with your life now and what a lot he did and so the word of the Lord comes to you, whoever you are God overlooks the times of your ignorance and there may be many long years but he commands you now turn around I can still do something with the rest of your life let's bow our heads before God in prayer in my services and meetings I usually never ask anyone to come forward but I ask people to do what Jesus said, sit down and count the cost sit down count the cost and ask yourself, is it worth following such a savior whatever price I may

have to pay yes it is say Lord yes it is thank you for overlooking the times of my ignorance help me Lord make these days this weekend a turning point in my life meet with me that my life will never again be the same fill me with your Holy Spirit in the innermost part and lead me in the way everlasting thank you Heavenly Father I believe there are at least some if not many who are responding to your call this evening and I pray you will give them an assurance that you will do for them more than they can ask or think for you are such a loving Father you'll never give a stone to one who asks for bread, you'll never give a serpent to one who asks for fish but good things to all those who ask him the Holy Spirit to those who ask thank you for hearing us in Jesus name, Amen thank you

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