

The Two Mysteries - the Mystery of Godliness

by Zac Poonen

Living a godly life is a mystery that requires a deep understanding of God's ways and a willingness to obey Him.

Duration: 1:06:28

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "Mystery"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of reverencing God and seeking revelation from Him. He explains that when we reverence God, He whispers things to our hearts that others may not hear, and this revelation can change our lives. The preacher also highlights the need to live as Christ lived, stating that anyone who claims to be a Christian should follow His example. He warns against the deception of claiming to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ while living a sinful life, comparing it to the story of the emperor's new clothes. The preacher encourages believers to seek the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and live a holy life.

Transcript

I want to speak to you in these two sessions about two great mysteries. If you have read the New Testament carefully, you would have come across this word mystery occurring in a number of places in the New Testament. It's not an Old Testament word.

And just by the way, those of you who are interested in serious Bible study, one of the things you could do a little homework on is find out words that occur only in the New Testament and that do not occur in the Old Testament. It's very easy if you go through a concordance. Any word that begins with Matthew does not occur in the Old Testament.

There are a number of words like that, or words that are much more mentioned in the New Testament than the Old Testament. Words like grace, faith, are hardly ever found in the Old Testament. Mystery is another one of those words.

And I want to show you this verse in Matthew chapter 13, where Jesus told his disciples when they asked him a question in Matthew 13, 10, why do you speak to these people in parables? Jesus answered and said to them, to you, that is to you disciples who are following me, it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. Jesus used that word mystery. And the kingdom of heaven, which we claim to belong to, or want to be a part of, has, according to this

verse, certain mysteries.

And if we are disciples of Jesus Christ, we are entitled to know those mysteries, according to this verse. If you are not a disciple of Jesus Christ, you will not know those mysteries. You will sit in a church and imagine yourself to be a part of God's people, but there's one thing you won't know.

You won't know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Because the Pharisees and the disciples sat in the same meeting, and when Jesus spoke, the disciples could know, and the Pharisees couldn't. That's what he says in this verse.

He explained things to his disciples, which he did not explain to the Pharisees. I don't know whether you've noticed that difference in the way Jesus responded to questions. I've noticed that when the disciples of Jesus asked him even the stupidest question, he always explained it to them.

But when the Pharisees asked them, he always confused them by giving them some other answer or saying, I'll ask you another question, and if you can't answer that, then I won't answer you. And I find there are two types of people I've met who come and ask me questions. One is those who are sincerely looking for the truth, and I'm willing to spend hours and days with such people.

And then there are others who come only to argue. And as soon as I sense that, I have to follow Jesus' method of saying, well, I'll ask you another question or something like that. And don't ever get anywhere.

Because such people are not interested in knowing the truth. They are only interested in intellectual argument. They are interested in winning an argument, and I am not interested in winning an argument.

I'd rather lose an argument and keep a friend than win an argument and drive him away. In any case, we don't bring people to heaven by winning arguments. I've discovered that.

It's by conviction of sin that people turn to God, not by being convinced intellectually. If I win an argument with a person, the fellow only feels defeated. He certainly is not going to respond to God if he feels defeated.

So Jesus revealed certain things. You know, one of the New Testament words, another New Testament word is revelation. Revealed.

In the world, we don't use that word much. I'm not talking about the book of Revelation. I'm talking about spiritual revelation.

The spirit of revelation. We use words like understand, grasp, which are intellectual words. Know.

Do you understand physics? Do you understand mathematics? It's all got to do with the mind. Can you grasp the situation in the Middle East? It's got to do with the mind. But revelation has got nothing to do with the mind.

It uses the mind. But it doesn't stop there. It's something of the spirit.

It passes through the mind but ends up in the spirit. Whereas if I'm studying mathematics or reading the newspapers, it stops in the mind. That's it.

It doesn't go beyond that. And when I hear a word of God and it stops in the mind, it just makes me a religious person. Not a spiritual person.

Not at all. There's a world of difference between religious people and spiritual people. If you want to know the difference, it's the difference between the Pharisees and Jesus.

You think there's some difference between the Pharisees and Jesus? Well, that's the difference between religious people and spiritual people. They sit in the same synagogue, sing the same hymns, pray the same prayers, read the same Bible. But the difference between them is the difference between hell and heaven.

It's what the Bible calls, at the end of the Bible, Babylon and Jerusalem. Tremendous difference. Religious people and spiritual people.

It's the way in the beginning of the Bible you see the difference between Cain and Abel. Both religious people, both offering to God, both sitting in the same meeting, but one went to hell and the other went to heaven. And that happens even today.

There's no guarantee that all of us sitting here are going to enter God's kingdom. No guarantee at all. That depends whether you want to be religious or spiritual.

When you're religious, you put up a front to impress people that you're a holy person, you're a good person, etc., etc. God doesn't care one bit for that. A spiritual person is more concerned with his heart, what God thinks of his heart, not what other people think of his appearance.

And so, revelation is something that goes beyond the mind to the heart. If I understand the truth, you can understand the truth of what I'm saying and it sticks in your mind. It's going to help you no more than mathematics or chemistry that you understood in a classroom.

It's just that your subject today is not mathematics, but the Bible. But it doesn't change you. It's information in your mind, information the devil has in his mind.

It doesn't change him. It doesn't save him from hell. And he knows the Bible better than any one of us.

And he still doesn't go to heaven. So, revelation is something that goes beyond the mind. There are secrets that the Lord has.

Do you tell your secrets to everybody? None of us do. There's information that's publicly available and there's information that is secret. And you know who you tell your secrets to, to those who are very close to you.

It's the same with the Lord. The closer we get to him, the more he reveals to us. And there's no other way of knowing it.

So, mysteries. Let me turn you to a verse in Psalm 25. Psalm 25, we read.

Here's a word similar to mysteries. The secret, verse 14, of the Lord is for those who fear him. And to them he will make known his covenant.

There is an old covenant and there is a new covenant. And let me tell you something. I have moved among all types of denominations in many, many countries.

And I've discovered one thing. That among believers, I'm not talking about nominal Christians, I'm talking about born-again believers, 90% of them don't have the slightest clue about the difference between the new covenant and the old covenant. Not even the slightest clue.

They don't even think there's a difference. Because it's not revealed to everybody. It says, he makes known his covenant to those who fear him.

And that proves to me that 90% of believers do not reverence God. If they revered God a little more, there would be far more victory over sin in their life. There would be a far more hatred of sin.

There would be far greater purity in their lives. There wouldn't be all these questions about divorce and remarriage among believers if there were a little more reverence in their lives. All these questions come because there's no revelation in the spirit.

It's all intellectual argument. What about this verse? What about that verse? What about this situation? What about that situation? This is all like a school classroom. All these questions disappear when you get revelation.

When you reverence God, you get the answer. You understand certain things. So the secret of the Lord, the mysteries of the Lord are revealed to those who fear him.

When you reverence God, God whispers certain things to your heart, which other people sitting around you don't hear. They get it in their mind. You get it in your heart.

And what you get changes your life. The other person just got a little more information. That's all.

It doesn't change him at all. He becomes a religious person and you become a spiritual person. And that's why Jesus said further on in Matthew 13.

I want you to see the rest of that section. He said in Matthew 13 verse 13, Therefore I speak to them in parables, because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Now why is it they don't understand? Is it because they are not intelligent? No.

They are very intelligent, but they're not humble. They don't reverence God. It's to the humble that God gives wisdom.

That also is mentioned in Psalm 25. To the humble and to those who fear God. And so they hear, but they don't understand.

And this prophecy is fulfilled, he says in Matthew 13, 14. You will keep on hearing, but you won't understand. You'll keep on seeing, but you won't perceive.

For the heart of this people has become dull. And what is the reason? The reason is that earlier on when God said certain things to them, they didn't obey. You know, one of the easiest ways to become deaf to the voice of God.

In fact, I would say this is a guaranteed way of becoming deaf to the voice of God, is just disobey what God has told you. I guarantee you'll become deaf to his voice in a little while. God's told you something and you disobey.

Okay, you become a little deaf, but you can still hear a little bit. God tells you another thing and you disobey, you probably become totally deaf. After that, you can sit in 10,000 meetings, your mind will grasp everything, your spirit will get nothing, because you become deaf.

Do you know there are lots of, I'm not talking about nominal Christians, believers. God's told them something. God's told them to set something right in their life.

They don't do it. Okay. What's the punishment? He doesn't send them to hell.

He just makes them deaf. They can't hear a thing. It's terrible.

I would not want to be deaf. Let me show you an example of some believers who reached that point. Hebrews chapter five.

Now in Hebrews, he's writing to believers. Do you know what type of believers? Hebrews three verse one says, therefore, holy brethren. Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling.

These are born again believers who have partaken of a heavenly calling. They are not godless unbelievers. Hebrews three one is very clear.

People who have received Jesus Christ as the apostle and high priest of their profession. And to them, he writes in Hebrews five 11 concerning Jesus. We have much to say to you, but it is hard to explain because you have become dull of hearing.

How did they become dull of hearing? Because there were things God spoke to them and they did not respond. They did not respond in the previous meeting. They did not act on what God told them to do two meetings ago.

They understood it. He absorbed it in their mind, but they did nothing about it. It's very dangerous to hear God's word and do nothing about it.

We have people who come to our church in Bangalore regularly who haven't become a part of our church, but who come as visitors. And I tell them, I say, dear brothers and sisters, I want to tell you very frankly, it's very dangerous for you to come to this meeting. If you're not interested in obedience, very dangerous because every meeting you come to now, if you were going to, I told, tell them if you're going to some dead church where there's no anointed message, where there's no word from God, just an intellectual word from the Bible, you'll be quite okay.

But if you go to a church where there's an anointed word from God that comes forth Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, boy, and you don't obey, you're in terrific danger. Because each word is going to harden you. It's going to harden you and harden you and harden you.

And first of all, your guilt before God is going to increase with every single meeting you attend. And you're going to become deaf. And after some time, you lose all sensation to the voice of God.

That'll be a terrible state to come in because then gradually what will happen is you'll begin to sin and take it lightly. I believe this is what's happened to Christendom as it's gone down. And that's why even divorce is taken so lightly today.

Pastors divorce, it's accepted as normal. How in the world did Christendom sink to this level? It was not like that a hundred years ago. It's because they kept on rejecting.

They are taken up with signs and wonders and not with obedience to God's word. Beware of that. Jesus kept on saying, he who has years to hear, let him hear.

Was it because those people sitting in front of him had no years? They all had ears. They had good hearing in their body, but very bad hearing in their hearts. Their heart could not hear what their mind was hearing because somewhere between the mind and the heart, they'd become deaf by disobedience.

So here the apostle says, you become dull of hearing. By this time, you should have been teaching others, but you still are not able to understand the elementary things. So it's a very dangerous thing.

Let me now turn to 1 Timothy and chapter three. There are many, many mysteries mentioned in scripture, but among all the mysteries mentioned in scripture, there are only two which are called great mysteries. And I want to speak about both of them.

I'll just mention the others. Here is the first great mystery. Among all the mysteries in scripture, as I said, there are two which are called great by the Holy Spirit.

That means more important, more important for our life on earth. Truths that can be understood only by divine revelation and truths that will be revealed to those who have a hunger, who need it in their life, not those who are trying to acquire information. You know, there are so many subjects we can discuss which don't have any personal application in our life.

I get questions sometimes from people asking me, who was Cain's wife? I say, even if you know who it is, how will that help you to live a more godly life today? Tell me. I got another question recently, who was Timothy's wife? I don't know. I don't even know whether he was married.

But even if I did, it wouldn't help me to live a more godly life. To know the name of Timothy's wife, it'll just satisfy my curiosity. And you know, there are things in the Bible which are written, I believe deliberately by God, to satisfy people's curiosity.

And you say, why has God written it? To sift out between the people who go to the Bible to satisfy curiosity and those who go to the Bible to live a godly life. And so, there are lots of things written in the Bible to satisfy curiosity. Biblical trivia.

Little, little things, you know, good for question-answer sessions and quizzes and all, but no use for a godly life. I used to wonder why God has left it all there. I've discovered that God wants to sift out among people who are interested in a godly life and who are interested in Bible trivia.

Information. Don't go to the Bible for information. You'll never know as much as the devil.

He knows much more than you in any case, as far as the Bible is concerned. Go to the scripture for godliness. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, all scripture has been given to us for instruction in righteousness, for correction, for reproof, that the man of God may be perfect.

That is the purpose of scripture. So, when we come with that desire, we understand here, 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness. So, the first great mystery is the mystery of godliness.

That means how to live a godly life. Wouldn't you agree with me that's a great secret? It is. Why is it so many Christians, after being Christians for 25 years, are still defeated by anger and by the lust of the eyes and the love of money and an unforgiving spirit and bitterness and jealousy? Why do they still have gossiping and slander in their life? They claim to be believers.

They are not like the unbelievers. Because godliness is a mystery. Being religious is no mystery.

Not at all. It's easy to be religious. Speak the right language and live like any old unbeliever.

Speak religious language and live like everybody else in the world. There was a French atheist who lived over 250 years ago called Voltaire. He was a philosopher.

He lived in France and he looked around at the Roman Catholic and many Protestant denominations in his time in the mid and late 1700s. He was a very sharp, shrewd man. He was an atheist.

He didn't believe in God. But he looked at the hypocrisy of all the Christians around him in various denominations. And as a very shrewd observer, he made this statement.

He said, these Christians around me differ in so many doctrines. But when it comes to money, they all have the same religion. They all love money.

And when it comes to money, he says, it doesn't make a difference whether they're Catholic or any branch of Protestant. They're just the same. They pursue after it.

They love it. They're selfish. They're stingy.

They're miserly. Their religion has made no difference to them at all in this area. And if it's like that in your life, you can be pretty sure your Christianity is not worth any more than atheism or any heathen religion.

It's true. Jesus said things like that, which hurt people like anything. They got so mad with him, they wanted to kill him.

And that's why preachers don't say such things today because they don't want to be killed. But it's the truth. It's true.

It's a mystery to live a godly life. What is the definition of a godly life? That depends on our definition of sin. There are many different definitions of sin.

To a lot of people, sin is disobedience to the Ten Commandments. But that is not the biblical definition of sin. That was a temporary standard.

It's like kindergarten level education. Kindergarten level education is also education, but that's not the all there is in education. If a person's got through kindergarten, you wouldn't call him educated.

Peter had got through kindergarten, but the people still called him an axe for illiterate because he wasn't considered an educated man. In the same way, what is sin? To people out in the world, it's not even the Ten Commandments. For some people, if they keep the Ten Commandments, they're okay.

Jesus went beyond that. He spoke about the heart, the thoughts, the inner attitudes. He said, that's what makes you holy or sinful.

Now, the best definition of sin I have found is Romans chapter 3, verse 23. Romans 3, verse 23 says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. You know this game called darts, where they have a number of circles with different marks and the center, which is called the bullseye, and you stand at a distance and throw these darts to see whether you can hit that mark, the bullseye, that absolute center.

That is sin, to miss the center in a very simple way. And every time you try, you miss the center, you've sinned. Some people are far away from the center, some people are pretty close to the center, but they've all missed the mark.

They've all fallen short of the glory of God. And the reward is only for the person who hits the center. They've all missed the mark.

Well, you can say, well, I'm not as bad as that fellow. He flung it, it went over there. Mine was at least a little closer.

Okay. But you still missed the mark. You don't get any prize any more than that fellow gets a prize.

We've all missed the mark. The mark is the glory of God. And the glory of God, the Bible says in John 1, 14, was seen in Jesus Christ.

It's not bright light and fire like on Mount Sinai. Those are all terrifying things. Jesus didn't come in such a terrifying way.

In him, the glory of God was seen in a human body. It looked just like ours. In fact, he was so like the other people that they needed some help in the garden of Gethsemane to catch him because he looked so much like other human beings.

Otherwise, why would they employ Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane after they had seen him so many times in the temple? Because he looked so much like others in the dark that they would have caught the wrong man. He was exactly like others in his appearance and everything, color of skin, everything, dress and length of hair, beard, everything. He looked just the same.

He dressed the same as others. He didn't dress in a special way. But in that body, God was manifest in human form.

That is the glory of God, seen in Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, full of tremendous kindness and compassion to fallen humanity, to wayward women who were living in adultery, prostitutes, to wayward men who had become murderers and thieves like the one who hung on the cross who was saved. Tremendous compassion. He said, I've come for sinners.

I've not come for all the people who think they're holy. But at the same time, a tremendous strictness towards religious hypocrites who pretended to be holy on the outside, but lived unholy lives in private. A tremendous strictness towards those who exploited poor people who turned widows out of their houses during the week because they couldn't pay the rent and would come on the Sabbath and pray long prayers.

Jesus exposed them. And when people made money in the temple in the name of religion, he took a whip and chased them out. That is the glory of God, full of grace and truth.

Compassion towards a leper. You know, those days, lepers had to stay outside the camp of the city. Nobody would go anywhere near them.

But Jesus would go and put his arms around them. God is like that. Tremendous compassion to the poor and the needy and the suffering and the weak and the despised.

Jesus lifted up women who were despised in Jewish society, lifted them up to be co-workers with him in his ministry. Something no rabbi had ever thought of doing before him. And so the glory of God was seen in many, many aspects in Jesus' life.

He would travel a hundred miles sometimes to help one needy soul. And at the same time, he would not tolerate any type of pride, arrogance, despising of others, religious hypocrisy, people who spoke fancy words in the meetings, but who did not live godly lives in private. He exposed them ruthlessly.

And the Bible says, he is the same yesterday, today and forever. If Jesus Christ were to come into our midst today, you know what he would do? He would expose religious hypocrisy. He would strip all this veneer of religious language and appearance from our life and expose us as we really are.

Are we willing for it? Or would we want to get rid of him? Just like those Jews wanted to get rid of him. A lot of people who claim to worship Jesus Christ, if he actually came into their midst, they wouldn't want him. They would not want him.

Today's world, I would say 90% of Christians would not want the real Jesus Christ. That's why preachers present before them an imaginary Christ, another Jesus, who is like a grandfather who just tolerates anything his grandchildren do. I'm sorry to say, Jesus is not like that.

He is not like that. Far from it. So sin is anything which is unchristlike.

Sin is not just disobedience to the Ten Commandments. If I speak in an unchristlike way, that is sin. If I behave in an unchristlike way to another human being on the face of the earth, that is sin.

If I look at a person in an unchristlike way, that's sin. If I'm unchristlike in my attitude to money, that's sin. If I'm unchristlike in my attitude towards my enemies, if I don't love them, if I love nine out of my ten enemies, I'm a sinner.

If I forgive nine out of the ten people who have hurt me, I'm a sinner. That is Christ's standard. So the secret of godliness, to live a Christlike life in a human body like ours.

Throughout the ages, it's been a tremendous mystery. How in the world can we, in a body like ours, live like Jesus Christ lived on this earth? First of all, we need to ask ourselves, does God expect it? I mean, we should not put unreasonable, unattainable standards before Christians. That's ridiculous.

You would not ask your little child to carry a five-ton weight on his head, knowing very well you cannot carry that. And you can be sure that no father will ever make his son, demand that his son do something unreasonable, which is impossible. And God, who is a much better father than any of us, will never, never ask us to do something which is impossible.

Can you accept that point? If you as a father would never ask your child to do something impossible, can you believe that God's at least a little better than you are? He's actually much better. That he'll never ask us to do something which is impossible. It's very important to arrive at that conclusion.

Do you believe that God's a better father than you? I have no problem believing it. I have no problem believing that God in the word, in his word, will never, never, never, never, never demand of me something that he knows is impossible. For example, there's no command in the word which says believers must fly.

Why? Because God knows we can't do it. I'm just giving you a ridiculous example. But let me give you a word which is in scripture.

1 John chapter 2 and verse 6. This is the word of God. The one who says he abides in Christ, and many of us say we abide in Christ, ought to walk in the same manner as he walked. Now my question is, what I asked earlier, is God demanding something impossible? What is he demanding? If you say you're a Christian, the Living Bible paraphrases like this, anyone who says he's a Christian should live as Christ lived.

Very simple language. Anyone who says he's a Christian should live as Christ lived. What is the voice you're hearing in your heart now? Impossible.

Who is saying that? God or the devil? Well, you better decide that because this is God's word, and the one who contradicts it must be the enemy of God's people. Throughout the ages, from the beginning of the creation of man, the devil has told man, beginning with Eve, God's commands are unreasonable. Has he told you not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, such a good tree, such a tasty tree? His command is unreasonable.

It is impossible to obey when you have such a strong desire to eat of that tree and God forbids it. Unreasonable, impossible. For 6,000 years in man's history, the devil has kept on whispering into man's ears, impossible, impossible.

Keeping God's commands, impossible. Impossible. Just be satisfied with forgiveness.

Just be satisfied with the righteousness of Christ clothing you and you're okay. That's all. And we have multitudes of Christians today who say, well, I'm clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

But you know, the righteousness of Christ is not only meant to be imputed to us, but also imparted to us. He imputes it to us the moment we are saved. But from that moment, he begins to impart it to us, little by little.

And if it has been imputed to you, as you imagine, and it's not being imparted to you day by day, then it was not imputed to you in the first place. You're deceiving yourself. That's what James says, faith without works is dead.

If you say you planted a seed, and after 25 years, nothing came up from there, you better check up. It's probably a stone, not a seed. I mean, I realize a seed takes time to become a tree, but 25 years, I've never seen a tree that takes that long to come out of the ground.

It must have been a stone. You thought it was a seed. You were quite sincere.

There are a lot of people who are sincere, but sincerely wrong. They thought it was a seed, but it was actually a stone. They thought that was the imputed righteousness of Christ, but it wasn't.

If it was, at least something, at least a little shoot should have come up. At least a little bit of that imparted righteousness should have come, even if it didn't grow into a full-grown tree. But for us to go around imagining that I'm going around with the imputed righteousness of Christ is a great deception.

Have you heard that children's story of the emperor's new clothes? It's a very beautiful story. There was a very haughty emperor. I think it's Hans Christian Andersen's, one of his stories.

There was this very haughty emperor, and there were two men who decided to teach him a lesson. And these two men came to him and said, we are tailors. And the king's birthday is coming up next month, and we've decided to stitch a new dress for the king with the most wonderful material in the whole world.

So the king said, what's special about this material? He said the wonderful thing about this material is only those who are worthy of their office will be able to see it. That means if you're holding a particular office and you're not worthy of it, you won't see it. But if you're worthy of it, you'll see the dress beautifully, clearly.

So these people said, the king said, let me see this dress. And these two people just held up their hands like this. There was nothing there.

And the king couldn't see a thing, because there wasn't anything. And the king began to think, hey, does that mean I'm not worthy of my office because I can't see a thing? How can I admit that I can't see a thing? How can I admit that I'm not worthy of my office? And they asked the king, what do you think of this? The king said, yes, it's beautiful. It's wonderful.

Lovely. And then the king called the prime minister and told the prime minister, you know, there's this dress these people have brought, this cloth, which only those who are worthy of their office can see. What do you think of this? The prime minister couldn't see a thing either.

And he began to think, am I not worthy of my office? I better not reveal it. And he said, oh, yes, this is lovely, beautiful dress. Then the king knew that the prime minister could see it, but only he was the one who couldn't see it.

And the prime minister thought, well, the king could see it, but I can't see it. And like that, two or three other officials in the king's government looked at it, and they all said it was beautiful. And the tailor said, it's very expensive.

It's not cheap, this dress, but we're willing to give it to you at a reduced price and all that type of stuff. And they were determined to loot the king. And they said, we'll stitch it for you.

And they took his measurement and went through all these motions of stitching, stitching, stitching through many days. And finally, they came for the day when they wanted to put it on the king to try it out. And they fitted him, and then on the king's birthday, he was to wear this dress and go.

And so they dressed him up. He was stark naked, wearing this dress, this invisible dress. And it was announced throughout the empire that only those who are worthy of their office will be able to see this dress.

All the others won't be able to see it. And the king walked through the roads, stark naked. Everybody was wondering, am I not worthy of my office? Because I can't see a thing.

And the fellow next to the person was also wondering, am I not worthy? But nobody would dare confess it to the other. And everybody said, yes, wonderful, wonderful dress. Tremendous, because they were all pretending to be worthy of their office.

Until a child, little baby cried out, hey, the king is naked. Then everybody knew. Baby had no office to protect.

You know, that's a picture of a lot of believers today who claim to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Nobody can see it. And these believers live the same rotten old life that any unbeliever lives.

They are impure in their minds. They fight as husbands and wives. They divorce one another.

They love money. They run after the things of the world. But they've got this invisible righteousness of Christ.

Even a child can say, this is a deception. It is, my brother, sister. Don't fool yourself.

Don't fool yourself like that emperor fooled himself. Don't let the devil make a fool of you like those men made a fool of the emperor. If Christ justifies a man, he will sanctify also.

Christ does not justify anybody whom he does not sanctify. That's true. Is it possible to live a godly life? The devil says no.

It's a mystery. But here is the great mystery of godliness. Why does the devil say it's impossible to live this godly life? Because he says your flesh is so prone to sin.

Your flesh is constantly being pulled down, pulled down by the law of gravity, that as impossible as it is for a man to fly, equally impossible it is for a man to overcome sin in his life. He will tell you and convince you that you cannot overcome your anger. It is impossible.

You believe that and according to your faith it is unto you. You will never overcome your anger because that's what you believe. He tells another person there's lusting with the eyes.

You'll never get over it. It is impossible. You believe the lie of the devil.

According to your faith it is unto you. You'll never overcome it. You'll never overcome your selfishness, the devil says.

You'll never overcome your love of money. You believe that and according to your faith it is unto you. You'd never overcome these things.

But another person, he says, well god says I can overcome these. According to his faith it is unto him and he overcomes. What's the difference between him and you? Faith.

That's all. It's not because he was stronger than you. What is the difference between Joshua and Caleb who entered the land of Canaan and all the other 600,000 people who did not enter? Was it because Joshua and Caleb's muscles were stronger? No.

Faith. For that matter, what is the difference between a believer whose sins are forgiven and the unbeliever whose sins are not forgiven? Faith. That's all.

It's not because this fellow's sins were less than that person's sins. His sins may have been more. But he believed that Christ died for his sins.

Let me ask you a simple question. Who do you think sinned more? The thief who was hanging on Jesus' right side or those Pharisees at the foot of the cross? Definitely the thief. Those Pharisees hadn't done 10% of what this thief did.

Now my question is who went to heaven and who went to hell? Isn't that interesting? That the people who sinned 90% less went to hell and the person who sinned 10 times more went to heaven. Pretty unrighteous, right? Of God to do that. God's ways are not our ways.

Jesus did not come for those who think they are righteous. He came for those who are sinners and who are honest enough to acknowledge it. The one thing which that thief had, which those Pharisees did not have, was honest acknowledgement of his condition.

And I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, there are some who sit here who are willing to honestly acknowledge their condition. There may be others, I hope not, who are sitting here who are unwilling to honestly acknowledge their condition. And that is what makes the difference.

That is the dividing line God is drawing today. All those who honestly acknowledge their condition, all those who are unwilling to honestly acknowledge their condition. That's all.

And that will make the difference between heaven and hell in the final day. And some of those people are unwilling to honestly acknowledge their condition maybe 10 times better than these people who honestly acknowledge their condition. But they still go to hell because everybody has missed the mark.

The trouble is some people who are pretty close to the mark are not willing to acknowledge that they've also missed the mark. They keep glorying in the fact that they are far better than those other people who went way off there. That's what the Pharisees felt.

Okay, we missed the mark, but we are not as way off as this thief on the cross. Okay, but that fellow goes to paradise and you don't. So what's his glorying that you are closer to the mark than him? Honest acknowledgement of our condition.

The devil says with this flesh of yours which is constantly pulling you down to sin, you can never live an overcoming life. What is the secret of godliness? Now some people say that the secret of living a holy life is, well, let me come to that in a moment. Before that, 1 Timothy 3.16. The great mystery of godliness is that God was revealed in the flesh and was vindicated or justified or pure in the spirit.

That means here was a person, Jesus Christ, who came in this flesh which you and I have, which we say is incapable of living a holy life, and was vindicated by the spirit or justified by the spirit means that the Holy Spirit certified that his life was pure and holy. It wasn't just man saying it. Or if you read spirit as a small s, that he was pure in his spirit, that it means that in this flesh his spirit was totally pure.

How is this possible? As long as nobody walked on this earth in a sinless life, we could always blame our flesh. Oh, it's because of my flesh that I sin. It's because of my flesh that I sin.

It's just like Adam blamed his wife. Well, I sinned because of this wife, God. If I were alone in this garden, I wouldn't have sinned, but this wretched woman whom you gave me to be my wife, she's the cause of all the problems.

The same type of excuse a lot of people make today. This person and that person. You know, I'm basically a very patient person, but these irritable children, oh dear, they make me impatient.

Always the problem is with somebody else. It's my irritable children or my difficult wife or my difficult boss. You know, I've heard people tell me in India, brother, in my office it is impossible to live as a Christian.

People are so evil. I'd like a transfer. I'd say even if you get a transfer, you'll find another place where it's impossible to be a Christian.

The problem is not with your surroundings. The problem is with you, brother. We have a flesh which pulls us down, makes us sin.

I heard a story of a man, it's a fairy tale, of a man who lived in a house where there was an evil little dwarf. Wherever he went, this little dwarf would come and trouble him, and trouble him, and trouble him. It was like a picture of our flesh.

So he decided one day to quietly shift his house. The dwarf lived in the house, you see. Shift his house in the middle of the night so that he'd move to another place where he wouldn't have this dwarf.

He'd be free from it. So he got the truck, middle of the night, packed everything in, closed the door, and went off. Halfway to the other house, he hears a voice from the middle of his luggage.

The little dwarf is there. So we are moving, are we? Be with you wherever you go. The problem is not with somebody else.

It's right inside you. And the only way to overcome this is through the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why nobody could overcome until the day of Pentecost.

And the Holy Spirit has been given primarily to give us grace so that we can overcome this law of sin and death that is in the world around us. Jesus came in our flesh. The Bible says in Hebrews 4.15, he was tempted in every single point.

Not only in every single point. There's another important expression there in Hebrews 4.15, as we are and did not sin. So now you have no excuse for your sin.

Supposing you grew up in a place where you had never in your life seen a man swim. And every time you got into the water, you sank and everybody around you sank. And you were absolutely convinced that a man cannot float in the water.

Because you've never in your life seen a man swim. And then one man comes along to your little village one day and says, hey, you know, let's go for a swim. And you say, swim? We'll sink in the water.

And you see him get into the water. And he spends hours there. Sometimes just floating on his back without even making any effort.

And swimming across, enjoying himself. And you are astounded. For 50 years you believed that man could never, never overcome the law of gravity in water.

And lo and behold, you see a man doing it. When he comes out of the water, you say, hey, have you got a body just like mine? Is there something special about your body? He says, no, here's my little son. He'll do the same thing.

And he puts his son in the water and he swims around. You say, boy, I miss something all these years. Here is a man who is just like me, who can do it.

And faith is born in your heart. Right? And I can also do it. If I learn the technique, I can also swim.

It's something like that, that happened to me. When I saw this mystery, that he was revealed in the flesh, he was pure in his spirit. I said, Lord, if you could do it, so can I. You know, to me that great, the great miracle is not Jesus walking on the water.

The great, greater miracle is Peter walking on the water. Jesus came like us. Let me ask you a question.

When Jesus walked on the water, did he have a body like ours or not? Are you sure? Yes. Do you think the law of gravity pulled him down? Yes or no? No doubt. And yet he overcame the law of gravity and walked on the water by faith.

And he told Peter, you come. And to remove any doubt from our minds, Peter also walked on the water. Now, Peter certainly had a body like ours.

And he walked on the water, but only as long as he looked at Jesus. The moment he turned his eyes away from the Lord, like the rest of us, he'd sink. This is a picture of the overcoming life.

The law of gravity is a picture of the law of sin and death that pulls us down constantly. Wherever we go, like this little dwarf follows us wherever we go. You can go and hide yourself in a room, the dwarf is there.

Sin is there. You know, people in India run away from the hustle and bustle of city life and say, I want to be holy. And they live as hermits in the jungle and they find their filthy thoughts are there in the jungle with them.

You can't get rid of the dwarf. It's there, pollutes you wherever you go. There is only one way.

It's not by running away from city into the jungle or running away from society. It's by experiencing the power of the spirit that lifts us up. You know, the secret of Jesus' life was not that he was God Almighty and lived this life in the power of God.

No, that would be no example for us. An angel flying across the pool would not be an example for you and me, right? Supposing an angel flies across a river and says, follow me. I say, sorry, I can't follow you.

I go down, you go across. I can admire you. Wonderful going up and down like that.

And a lot of people, what they do with Jesus is admire him. Oh, what a beautiful life he lived. How sinless, how holy, how humble, how pure.

But of course, I can't live like that. Why not? You say, well, he was God. But did he use his, the point, of course, he was God.

That's why we worship him. But did he use his resources as God when he lived on earth? Or did he live with our resources? That's the important question. If he used the resources he had as God, then I say, forget it.

He's teasing me when he says, follow me. I say, Lord, I can't follow you. And yet he kept on saying, follow me.

But he's not teasing me. He did not use his resources as God. Supposing I'm a poor, let me use an illustration.

Supposing I'm a very poor person living in a slum in India, wondering how to live on 500 rupees a month, which is 100 rand a month. How can I live on this 100 rand or 500 rupees a month? It's impossible to live a clean life in this surroundings, even as a single person. And the multimillionaire from the United States comes to India, to my little slum, to teach me how to live on 500 rand.

Okay? And he comes and lives in my little slum. And he says, okay, I'll teach you how to live. I'll build a little house like you built.

And I live here. And every time he's financially hard up, he goes to some ATM machine and puts his credit card in and draws hundreds of rupees out and lives. And he says to me, follow me.

And I say, sir, I can't follow you. You got a credit card from which you can draw millions of dollars. I have nothing.

So he says, okay, I will not, even though I'm a multimillionaire, I'll never use this credit card. I'll lock it away. And he works like me, earns 500 rupees or 100 rand a month and never touches his credit card.

Then he can be an example to me, right? If he used this credit card, he would not be an example for me at all. Now, the question is, when Jesus came to earth, did he use his heavenly credit card or not? He did not. That's why he's an example for me.

Otherwise he can never say, follow me. He used only the resources that he offers me today. The power of the Holy Spirit.

It says in Romans 6, 14, the secret of overcoming sin. Sin shall not rule over you because you are not under law, but under grace. Supposing this is grace.

This is to be under grace. When I'm under grace, I don't sin. It's like saying, if you've got a good umbrella in the rain, you don't get wet.

Everybody else around you may be getting wet, but you don't get wet. And if it's a big enough umbrella, not a spot on you will get wet. You're under grace.

Now my question is, who was the first human being mentioned in scripture who came under grace? You read words like in Genesis 6, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Found grace means found favor. It doesn't mean he came under grace.

He did not. Grace came only through Jesus Christ. John 1, 17 says that very clearly.

The law came through Moses. Grace came through Jesus Christ. There was no grace in the world till Jesus came.

Who was the first person who came under grace? Okay. The answer is here in Luke chapter two. Luke chapter two in verse 40.

The child Jesus, he's talking about Jesus' childhood. The child Jesus continued to grow and become strong. Luke 2, 40.

Increasing in wisdom. And the grace of God was upon him. The grace of God was upon him.

Who was the first person who came under grace? Jesus. Don't say grace is undeserved favor. Jesus did not get undeserved favor.

He deserved everything that he got from God. Grace is not undeserved favor. Some of the definitions we have heard from childhood are wrong.

Grace is not undeserved favor. Grace is the power of God that enables us to live an overcoming life. That's what grace is.

My grace is sufficient for you because my power is made perfect in your weakness. That's the definition of grace. 2 Corinthians 12, 9. So the grace of God is upon Jesus.

So what is the result? Romans 6, 14. Sin would not have power over him. And if the same grace of God is upon you and me, just like a good umbrella won't allow you to get wet, not a drop of rain, the grace of God can keep you from sinning.

Otherwise, it's impossible. Romans 8 in verse 2 and 3 reads like this. Verse 2. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.

It's a wonderful verse. The law of sin and death, I told you, is like the law of gravity that pulls us down, down, down, down. Haven't you found that? Sin is always pulling you down.

When you don't want to lose your temper, you lose your temper. When you don't want to lust, you lust. When you don't want to be bitter, you become bitter.

When you don't want to be selfish, you act selfishly. It's a law, like the law of gravity. The law, it's called the law of sin and death.

Pulls us down, pulls us down, pulls us down. Is it possible to overcome the law of gravity? Here is the law of gravity operating on this book. It won't stand here for a moment.

It's always falling. But here, it's not falling. Isn't that amazing? Still not falling.

Still not falling. Why? Is the law of gravity stopped operating in this area? No. It's operating.

It's trying its best to pull this book down. But another law, the law of life in my body, is holding it up against the law of gravity. That's the meaning of Romans 8.2. The law of the Holy Spirit, of life in Christ Jesus, sets me free from this law of sin and death.

Have you read Jude verse 24? He is able to keep you from falling. He is able to keep you from falling. But like everything else in the Christian life, it's dependent on faith.

If you don't believe it, it doesn't work in your life. In fact, nothing works in our life if we don't believe. Have you read those words in Matthew 13, 58? He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Did he want to do mighty works for them? Yes. Did they need mighty works in their life? Yes. Imagine.

They needed it, they wanted it, Jesus wanted to do it for them, and they still didn't receive it. Isn't that sad? You say, why? They wanted it, Jesus wanted it, and they still didn't get it right. Because they wouldn't believe.

You want victory over sin, Jesus wants to give you victory over sin, you still don't get it because of unbelief. You believe the devil's life are so long that you live and die with your temper, you live and die with your lust, you live and die with your selfishness, you live and die in your sinful, that the only thing that Jesus can ever do for you is forgive your sins. He is powerless to help you overcome your sinful nature.

Well, if that's what you believe, that's what you'll have. But another person believes something different, and he's got more. He's unseen the secret of a godly life.

Let me say one last thing before I close. 1 Timothy chapter 4. You must read this in the context of what we just read in 1 Timothy 3.16. It's continuing from 1 Timothy 3.16, the next verse, chapter 4, verse 1. But, but, but, but, the Holy Spirit says that in the last days, some people will turn away from this faith that Jesus came and lived a godly life and gave us an example to live like that. People will turn away from that, and they will pay attention to certain deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

And doctrines of demons are not the doctrines that tell us to kill and steal, and God, the devil didn't tell Eve anything like that. The devil just told Eve to live by her reason, to have positive thinking. That's what the devil said.

No. Doctrines of demons are things like, example, verse 3, don't get married. Don't eat certain foods.

You know, there are people like that who teach that, even in our country. If you want to be holy, don't get married. If you want to be holy, be a vegetarian.

Meat, meat makes you sin. And marriage, marriage will cause you so many problems, you'll sin. If you want to be holy, don't get married.

But the secret of godliness is not, don't get married, don't eat meat. These are all doctrines of demons. Now, if somebody wants to be single like Paul, that's fine, and if somebody wants to be vegetarian, that's fine.

But don't call it the secret of godliness, that's all I'm saying. The secret of godliness is none of these self-disciplined yoga and positive thinking and all these methods. It's none of these things.

It is Jesus came in our flesh. And the way he lived in the power of the Holy Spirit with the grace upon him, you can also live the same way. That is the secret.

And I want to say to you the good news, my brother, sister. You don't have to live that defeated life anymore. If you want to, you can overcome.

If you will trust the Lord in a simple way, acknowledging your need, just like you trusted him for the forgiveness of your sins, your life can go one step higher. Like it went one step higher the day your sins were forgiven. But you missed something which you can have.

It doesn't have to be a mystery to you anymore. Reverence God, and he will reveal the secret to you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, apply the truths of your word to our hearts, that we can live an overcoming life and be a credit to your name in this sin-cursed earth, to be a witness against the lies of the devil. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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