

(The Works of Faith) Being Centred in God

by Zac Poonen

True holiness is a life centered in God, seeking to glorify Him in everything, and is not just about avoiding bad habits.

Duration: 56:08

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-23, Philippians 2:19-21, Colossians 1:18-20

Topics: "Kingdom Living", "Faith And Works"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the consequences of evil deeds not being punished quickly, as stated in Ecclesiastes 8:11. He poses a thought-provoking question about the impact of physical consequences for lying and lusting, suggesting that such actions would cease if there were immediate physical repercussions. The preacher then shares his belief that seeking the kingdom of God first and His righteousness will provide for all earthly needs, even for the poorest individuals. He asserts that this principle should work in any situation, country, or century, and shares his personal experience of witnessing its truth over 27 years. The sermon concludes with a call to prioritize God's interests in every decision and to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

It says in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 21, this is the first promise in the New Testament. The first promise in the New Testament is, she will bear a son and call his name Jesus. It is he who will save his people from their sins.

So the name Jesus means saviour because he was going to save his people from their sins. That's why he is called Jesus. Now that's different from being forgiven.

I can be forgiven and yet remain in my sins. But Jesus came to save us from our sins. So in order to understand what Jesus actually came to save us from, it is important for us to know what sin is.

There are many many different understandings of what sin is. So if a man thinks that sin is, well, just getting drunk or some bad habit in his life, then his understanding of salvation will be just that, that if God saves me from those two or three bad habits, he saved me. So the deeper our understanding of sin, the better will be our understanding of salvation.

And so if we want to understand sin, we got to go back to the Old Testament and see Genesis chapter 3, how sin first came. And then we understand what sin is. And then we understand what being saved from sin is.

When God first created man, and he created the earth, and it says that God placed two trees there in the garden. One was the tree of life. There were thousands of trees, but these two are mentioned.

The tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Now it wasn't the devil who created that tree of knowledge of good and evil, it was God who created that tree. And yet, and God looked at all that he had created and he said it was very good.

Which means even that tree was good in one sense, in that it offered man an opportunity to be tested. That when God had made that tree, and he made all the earth, it says on the end of the sixth day, he looked at everything that he had created, which included that tree, and he said it was very good. So we mustn't forget that.

So when God told Adam that you mustn't eat of that tree, it was a means by which man would be tested. And is testing good? Yes. What we learn from there is a man cannot become really holy if he is not tested and he doesn't make a choice for God.

See, if God had sent Adam into the garden of Eden and told him you can do whatever you like, you can eat whatever you like and do anything you like, he wouldn't have been tested and he could never have become holy. God cannot make a man holy without the man's choice. It's not just a question of obedience.

Look at the planets and the stars. They have obeyed God for thousands of years, going in their orbits and doing exactly what God wants them to do, and yet none of them are holy. And that's an indication how obedience won't make anyone holy.

If God made Adam like a robot that just automatically obeyed God, he wouldn't be holy. And if God sent him into a garden where he said you can do whatever you like, he wouldn't be holy. In order to be holy, man had to make a choice.

That's what the stars and planets cannot make. The trees and plants cannot make a choice. So they can't be holy.

And if God had made man without the power of choice, he could never have become holy. And when God gives man the power of choice, he needs to be tested. And when he's tested, if he passes the test, he becomes holy.

So holiness is always the result of a choice. Because I'm choosing to do God's will against my own will. I'm choosing God above other things.

And that is what Adam and Eve were tested with in the Garden of Eden. It says here in Genesis 3 that the serpent, the devil came into the serpent and tempted Eve. Now, wasn't God watching all this? Didn't God see the devil come into the serpent? Didn't God see the serpent tempting Eve? Couldn't God have stopped it? He could have, but he didn't.

It was permitted, because man had to be tested. And that's exactly why God's allowed the devil to exist in the world even today. A lot of things that the devil does in the world, that we wonder why God even allows

him to exist.

Why does God allow the devil to tempt God's children in so many ways? Why does God allow the devil to deceive so many people? Beyond it all is God's purpose to make man holy. And man cannot be holy unless he makes a choice. And that's why temptation is necessary.

Do you know that if God removed all temptation from your life, okay, you wouldn't sin, but you wouldn't be holy either. And that's the loss that we can suffer if we're not tempted. And that's why temptation is a necessary thing.

Because when temptation comes, I have an opportunity to say, I choose God. And without that choice, God cannot make me holy, because God doesn't force anyone to follow him or to obey him. It must be a personal choice.

And that's the opportunity that Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden, to make a personal choice. I want God. And that's the choice they did not make.

Because it says here, that the devil pointed to this tree and said, pointed out all the advantages of having it, and never told them of all the consequences that would come if they disobeyed God. And it says here in Genesis 3, 6, When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, it was a delight to the eyes, the tree desired to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate, and gave her husband to eat. The choice that came before Eve at that time was, Are you going to choose God? Or are you going to choose what God has created? Even if it's very, very attractive.

And that's the choice that comes to all of us when we are tempted also. You think of any temptation that comes to your life, it's always a choice between God and something created. Something created that's very attractive, that's good for your eyes to look at, and that draws out your being.

Temptation is always like that. If temptation is not attractive, there is no temptation in it. If this tree was, you know, ugly and repulsive, there wouldn't be a temptation.

And God has created a lot of things in the world, which tempt us, which tempt our eyes, which tempt our heart, money, many pretty things, people, to which we are attracted. And we know it's wrong. And always the question that God's asking you in temptation is this, Do you choose me? Or do you choose what I've created? And you know how most men say, I choose what God's created.

I'm willing to disobey God. This thing God's created is more important for me. Whether it's money or a woman or anything.

Something on earth that God's created is more important than God himself. Okay, that's fine. That man's made his choice.

And that's the way it's going to go. But in the midst of all these millions of people who are making this choice, God has a few people who say, God, I want you. More than what you've created.

And if you're making that choice, then you're making the choice that Jesus made as a man. That's what it means to follow Jesus. That's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

That in each temptation I'm saying, God, I want you. Not what you've created. What you've created is so attractive.

And it attracts me, no doubt. But I don't want that. I want you.

You are more important to me, more precious to me than anything you've created. See, if you've not, and we have to make that choice again and again and again and again. If you're not making that choice, we're not disciples.

We're not really holy. A lot of people think holiness is, well, I read the Bible and I say my prayers and I live a fairly decent life and I'm holy. No.

You're holy if you decide to choose God. You decide to choose Jesus alone. That's more important than all creative things.

Whenever you're tempted with something God has created, something attractive, something that draws out your whole being, you say, no, I want Jesus. I want to please God here. That is the position to which the Lord seeks to bring us.

That's what it means to be saved from sin. You know, what we read in Matthew 12:1, Jesus came to save us from sin. He came to save us from choosing the created above the creator.

Has he done that in your life? Has he succeeded in showing you that the creator is more important than the created? In situation after situation after situation. You know, when the devil tempted Jesus, it was like that. Why don't you turn these stones into bread? And Jesus replied saying no.

Man's not meant to live by bread alone. Man's got to live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. The word from God's mouth is more important to Jesus than even bread.

And here is where Eve made the opposite choice. Where she said, the word from God's mouth is not important. What satisfies me right now, that's important.

And that's the choice that human beings are making all over the world. This satisfies me right now. Yeah, I know God said something, but that's not important.

Whereas Jesus made that opposite choice there. He said, no, what God said is important. And it doesn't matter even if I have to starve.

I'm going to do what God said. This is the difference between making the choice that Eve made and making the choice that Jesus made. And we find such situations many times a day.

You come into some situation and you know that God's word says something about that. That that particular part is wrong. And when you know, your conscience tells you what God's word has said and you ignore the word of God and you say, well, never mind, this pleases me right now.

You're making the same choice that Eve made. And the same death, the spiritual death that came upon Eve will come upon you. The Lord told Eve, the day you eat thereof, you will surely die.

But Jesus said, man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. The devil came to Eve, questioning what God had said. The first question that the devil asked Eve was this.

Has God really said? Genesis 3:3 That you can't eat or touch from, eat of every tree in the garden. And when, you know, Eve told her that God had said we would die. Immediately he comes around and

questions that judgment of God.

You shall not die. You're not going to die, even if you disobey God. And that's what the devil has told man everywhere.

Nothing's going to happen, even if you disobey God. Nothing's going to happen, don't worry. You'll be alright.

God's a God of love. You can disobey God and you can get away with it. But Eve discovered that the devil was a liar.

And as Christians, we're supposed to stand for one thing. To prove, to demonstrate to this world that what God has said is true and that the devil is a liar. Not just with our words, but with our life.

That everything the devil says is a lie. And only what God says is true. You know, there's a very interesting verse in the book of Ecclesiastes.

You know what that is, just after Proverbs. Ecclesiastes in chapter 8. It tells us the reason why man continues to live in sin. In Ecclesiastes chapter 8, verse 11.

It says, because punishment against an evil deed is not executed quickly. Therefore, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set to do evil. If my tongue got a little paralyzed every time I told a lie, how long do you think I'd continue lying? How long do you think anybody would continue lying? I think lying would stop all over the world.

If my eye became a little blind every time I lusted after a woman, how long do you think that would continue in the world? It would disappear. A lot of people say, I can't do it, I can't, I'm tempted. No, that's not the reason.

You can overcome it if you want. The thing is, you don't believe there's going to be any punishment. If the punishment came immediately, we would beware of sinning.

With our eyes or our tongue or anything. But because God has delayed that punishment and he says he's going to punish only later, most men assume, most human beings, there is not going to be any final punishment. Take a word like this, for example, what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12.

In Matthew chapter 12, Jesus said, in verse 36, Every careless word or idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment. You know, I have found very, very few believers in my whole life who really believe that verse. If they did believe it, they would be very, very careful with the words they speak.

You know the careless words we speak about other people? The backbiting, the gossiping, so many things. Do you really believe that every word we speak, one day we're going to give an account for it before God? I don't think there are many believers who believe it, but it's true. It's because the judgment doesn't come immediately that people keep on doing evil.

People are going to get a big surprise when Jesus comes again and judges everybody and they discover that all the words they ever spoke in their life, they're going to give an account for. They say, hey Lord, we didn't know it was going to happen like this. Yes, it was written in his word.

Every word, idle word we speak, we give an account in the day of judgment. What does it mean when the Bible speaks about the fear of God being the beginning of wisdom? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To fear the Lord is first of all to take God's word seriously.

That when God says something, he means it. This was the test that came to Eve. God said you must not eat of that tree.

If you eat of it, you'll surely die. And the devil said ignore it. It's not serious.

And once the devil has convinced you to ignore some word of God, it's not serious, it's not important. You can afford to forget about it. The fear of God has gone away from your life.

And then sin becomes very easy. I believe this is the main reason why many, many, many Christians don't grow in their Christian life because they don't take God's word seriously. They don't take man supposed to live, Jesus said, by every word that proceeds from God's mouth.

There's only one book in the whole world, and that's the Bible, which tells us exactly what God thinks about various situations, what God's opinion is about everything. And if I don't take these words seriously, I don't fear God. And I'm not going to be free from sin, and I'm not going to be able to live a life pleasing to God.

Now there's a type of fear of God, which all the religions, all the false religions of the world teach. And we're not talking about that type of fear. There are two types of fear of God, we must remember.

One is false, religions teach that, the fear that God will hurt me. And the other fear, the right type of fear, is the fear that I will hurt God. That's the type of fear that we need to have.

God, I never want to do anything in my life that will hurt you. I want to please you in everything in my life. This other type of fear, that God may punish me, God may hurt me, that was in the Old Testament.

That's not really going to make me holy. I'll be holy because I'm afraid of punishment. But God wants to bring us to a step further, where I want to be holy because I want to please Him.

See, Jesus, for example, why did He avoid sin? He didn't avoid sin because He was afraid He'd be punished by the Father. No, He avoided sin because He wanted to please the Father. That's the place God wants to bring us to.

So, sin is basically seeking to please myself, to be centered in myself, to think of what I can get out of it. And Jesus came to deliver us from that self-centered life. Turn to Matthew chapter 6 and you'll see that in the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus was telling His disciples how to pray, not to pray like the heathen. And He said, the main thing you must remember in prayer, He was teaching them, is God wants you to be centered in Him. To be centered in yourself is the root of all sin.

And the root of all the unhappiness and misery there is in the human race is because man thinks of himself. He revolves around himself. He thinks of how this will benefit me, what's good for me.

And as long as we have men thinking only in terms of how this will benefit me and what's going to be good for me, he may give up all his bad habits, but he's a sinner. Many Christians haven't seen this. They think

because they've given up a lot of bad habits, they're holy.

No. As long as your life is centered around yourself and what benefit you can get out of it, you're still a sinner. There are a lot of people who come, except Jesus.

For example, there's a gospel being preached in the world today. They call it a gospel, where they say, well, Jesus is going to make you wealthy. Well, who wouldn't like to hear that? Everybody in the world would like to hear that.

Jesus will solve your problems, and Jesus will make you healthy, and Jesus will make you wealthy. It doesn't deliver man from his self-centeredness. And that's why I say it's a false gospel.

Everybody in the world wants that. Whereas Jesus came to deliver us from this self-centered life, where I'm thinking only in terms of me and my family and how I can benefit from this. That's not the gospel.

Jesus said, when you pray, don't pray beginning by saying, Lord, make me wealthy or healthy. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

In other words, let your center shift from what's going to benefit you to what's going to bring glory to God. Then we become truly holy. True holiness is not giving up bad habits.

That's good. It's in the beginning. We give up bad habits and we give up a lot of things.

But ultimately, true holiness is when my life is centered in God. And in everything, I seek to glorify God. I seek to please Him.

Lord, don't let your name be dishonored. Let your name be glorified. Let your kingdom come.

Let your will be done. It's a whole life that's now centered and focused on God Himself. That is what it means to be saved from sin.

And to be truly holy. As I said, we can have low standards of holiness and sin. And of course, we only think in terms of being free from certain bad habits.

If I don't tell lies and I don't get upset with people, I think I'm holy. There are a lot of people who don't drink, who don't smoke, who don't gamble, who don't have any bad habits, who don't hurt anybody else. And who don't use swear words.

Maybe they've got a little bit of patience and control of their temper. But they're living completely for themselves. Their whole life revolves around themselves and their family and how they can live a more comfortable life and make a little more money.

And they go to church and read the Bible. They're not saved from sin. They're saved from certain bad habits.

But their life is still centered around themselves. And as long as your life is centered around yourself, you can say Jesus hasn't saved you from sin. He saved you from certain superficial results of sin.

But the root of it remains there. What did we read in Genesis chapter 3? When Eve saw that tree satisfied some need of hers. I was going to get some benefit out of eating that tree.

It was good for my eyes, good for my stomach. And it's going to make me wise. I'm going to take it.

See, the devil didn't tempt Eve to kill Adam or some terrible sin like that. It was such an innocent looking thing, which didn't look so evil. But it was seeking her own, ignoring the word of God.

And that's how the devil keeps a lot of Christians spending their whole life avoiding bad habits. They don't kill anybody. They don't commit adultery.

They don't commit what the world calls gross sins. But if you look at their lifestyle, how they spend their time and how they spend their money and how they spend their life, it's all for themselves. And they're sinners.

They don't even know it. Because when you live your life centered around yourself, you're living in sin. And Jesus came to save us from our sin.

And that's the reason why so many Christians are unhappy. And that's why many of them are so discouraged so frequently. That's why there's no joy in their life.

That's why there's no victory in their life. Because you cannot come into the life the New Testament describes until you get your life centered in God. We can say that Jesus came to deliver us from a life which is occupied with myself and my family to a life that's occupied with God first.

And Jesus said, if you live that life, you won't starve. Your family won't suffer. You seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness.

And God will take care of all your earthly needs. And I remember when we started our work in India 27 years ago. India is a very poor country.

One of the poorest countries on the face of the earth. And I said, Lord, I want to prove in this country where there is no social security, where there's no such thing as medical insurance or any such thing, where you've got to pay for everything. If you're sick, you go to the hospital and you pay every last cent for the expense.

Nobody's going to pay it for you. And the government pays you nothing for anything. Everything is by yourself.

If you're poor, you're poor. And a lot of people who die of poverty, who die of starvation. In this country, I want to prove to an unbelieving generation that anyone, the poorest person in this country, if he seeks the kingdom of God first and His righteousness, all that he needs for his earthly life, an almighty God will provide.

If that is not true, let me throw this Bible away and stop preaching. There's nothing worth preaching. If it doesn't work, if it works only in rich countries where they have social security and they've got kind believers to look after them when they're in need, well, then this is just a theory.

It's got to work in any situation, in any country, in any century. Then it's the word of God. And I tell you, after 27 years, I can tell you it's true.

I've seen in so many, many, many cases. I've never seen a single case of failure till today. In all our churches, I have never seen one case.

I've seen poor people, I've seen people in debt, and I've seen them come to Christ and seek God's kingdom first, put God first and not themselves, and I've seen what God's done for them. He's provided their need, He's taken care of their earthly need. He hasn't made them millionaires.

Thank God He didn't do that. That would have destroyed them in another way. But He's provided their need and it's proved to me that in any century, in any country, if you put God first, your other things are added to you.

So it's become more and more clear to me. The temptation that always comes to us is, is God going to be first in your life or is some creative thing going to be first? Why do we say that gluttony is a sin? Because you're making food, you're God. Instead of the God of heaven, you're God.

There's no difference between that man and another man who makes money his God. It's just a different God, that's all. Both of them have missed the true God.

But a lot of people know that those who run after money are living in sin and they don't realize that just being taken up with eating food is just as bad. Anything God's created, when that becomes more important to you than God Himself, you're going along a path that's going to lead to destruction. That's what Eve didn't realize and that's what the devil seeks to deceive Christians today as well with.

So Jesus said, when you pray, change your whole way of life. You know, prayer is an expression of what's deep down in our heart. I don't mean when we pray in public, because usually when we pray in public, we try to sound spiritual and say the right things.

But when we are alone, what we pray for shows what is deep down in our heart. What is the deepest desire of your heart? You need to ask yourself, you've got to be really honest with God to find out if Jesus has saved you, really. If Jesus has really saved you from sin, the deepest desire in your heart today should be, God must be glorified by my life.

Whether I have money or don't have money, whether I get food to eat or don't get food to eat, whether I live comfortably or live in poverty, makes no difference. If God can be glorified by my life, that's the most important thing for me. And for my family, my greatest desire should be, God must be glorified through my family.

There is a man centered in God. Then we can say that Jesus has accomplished his purpose in your life. You remember John the Baptist said that Jesus came to lay the axe to the root of the tree.

And the root of the tree in all of our lives is that we seek our own. It's not just unbelievers. I want to show you a verse in Philippians 2. In Philippians 2 we read of the Apostle Paul looking around at his co-workers.

Now, his co-workers were very fine believers and very fine Christians. But he looked at his co-workers and do you know what he said about them? Philippians 2, he was thinking of sending one of his co-workers to Philippi to encourage the church there. And he says in Philippians 2.19, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, because, verse 20, I have nobody else among all my co-workers who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare for, listen to this, verse 21, they all seek after their own interests and not those of Christ Jesus.

Was he talking about unbelievers? No. He was saying that even among his co-workers he could discern that everybody was seeking their own interests except Timothy. And that's what made Timothy a spiritual

man.

Now, I've read that verse and say, Lord, if that was true among Paul's co-workers, can you imagine how much more true it is of a lot of people today? Here is a verse that all of us need to really seriously think about. Philippians 2.21 All seek after their own interests and not those of Christ Jesus. Let that be like a mirror.

Examine your own heart. An x-ray or a scan by which we search our own heart and say, Lord, have I really been saved from sin? Have I really been saved from seeking after my own interests to seek those of Christ Jesus? That means in the decisions I take in my life, am I thinking primarily in terms of how this will benefit and promote the kingdom of God or how this will benefit and promote my own interests? You think of Jesus. We talk about following Jesus.

When Jesus was in heaven, what was it that made Him leave heaven and come to this earth? Supposing He had sat in heaven and thought, what will promote my own interests the best? He would have stayed in heaven. Right? Sure. What was it that made Him come to earth? What will promote the Father's interests the more? I mean, whether I suffer or not is secondary.

What will be in the Father's interest? What will be the best for other people? And He realized that coming to earth was the best thing, even if it meant personal loss. This is the spirit that has driven missionaries from wealthy countries to extremely poor conditions in poor countries. What did they gain out of it? Nothing.

Except that some people would hear the gospel and be benefited. That is the spirit of Christ. And it's to be found not only in missionaries.

I believe that God wants it to be found even if you are never called to be a missionary, that every decision of yours must be governed by will this promote my own interest or the interest of God. For example, when I move from one place to another, what are the factors that determine my moving? God, can I be of greater value to your kingdom if I am here? I want to be totally available to you. This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

That I seek God's interest in everything. I don't know whether we have seen how serious an issue this is. I want to show you another verse in Matthew's gospel in chapter 16.

Matthew's gospel chapter 16. This is the time when Jesus spoke to His disciples for the first time and told them that He was going to die on the cross. And as soon as it says in verse 21, from that time Jesus began to show His disciples how He must go to Jerusalem and suffer and die on the cross.

And Peter, verse 22, took Him aside and rebuked Him saying, Lord, God forbid it, this shall never happen to you. Now you know that story how Peter's... I think Peter had a good heart. He was considering the Lord's interest that you shouldn't suffer.

But look at the Lord's reply to him. It's very interesting to see the reply the Lord gave to him. Get behind Me, Satan.

Jesus never said that to any other human being except to Peter. Get behind Me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to Me.

You are a hindrance to Me. And what is the reason? Read the rest of that verse. Your mind is set not on God's interests but man's.

So, who is a stumbling block to Jesus? Anyone whose mind is set on human interests and not God's interests. Did you know that? Did you know that if your mind is set on earthly interests and not God's interests, you may think you are not living in sin, but you are a hindrance. Jesus says, you are a hindrance to Me.

And any person who wants to be a disciple of Jesus will take that seriously. For myself, for many years, I have sought to live by this rule, to think in terms of decisions that I make. Now, will that Lord promote your interests? Is that the best way for me to... Is that the best place for me to live? Promoting your interests, not mine.

Not to think what will be the best for me and my family, but what will be the best for God and His kingdom. That's what it means to seek God's kingdom first. And I assure you, God will not ignore our family's needs.

You and your family are not going to suffer because you put God first. In fact, you will be blessed. Certainly.

When Eve put her own interests above God's, was she blessed or did she suffer? What happened to her first son? Did he become a missionary or a murderer? A murderer. Look at all the chaos that came into her descendants. It all started from her seeking her own interests.

Okay, she enjoyed it for a while. But look at the suffering that came. Jesus came to show another way of life, a totally different way of life, where He would never take a decision based on what was going to be pleasing to Him, or what would make His life comfortable.

If He had sought what would make His life comfortable, He would never have come from heaven in the first place. He would have just stayed there forever. He came because that would further the Father's interests.

That would be a blessing for other people. What does it mean to follow Jesus? It means to be motivated by that same inner longing. Not just to live a pure life externally.

I know a lot of Hindus in my country who live a very pure life externally. Yeah, to live a pure life externally is not just being free from sin. Sin is where I seek my own interests, where my life is centered around myself, where my thinking is around myself.

And you know, what we think usually indicates where our interests are. Jesus said, where your treasure is, your heart will be also there. Think of a man who is a businessman, an unconverted businessman.

What do you think his mind is revolving around most of the time? How to expand his business and how to make more money? That's what he is thinking of all the time. And he thinks so much about it that when he goes to bed at night, he dreams about it. Our dreams are usually an indication of what we spend most of our time thinking about.

You spend most of the time thinking about a certain type of thing, that's what you're going to dream about at night. And the businessman dreams about making money, he dreams about expanding his business. The fellow is working on computers, he thinks about things about that, in the middle of the night he gets a

solution to the computer problem he's working on, because that's what he's been thinking about the whole day.

And the man who has been thinking, thinking, thinking, how his life can promote God's interest, what do you think he's going to dream about at night? You know the answer. And he's going to dream about the kingdom of God. He's going to dream about things concerning God's kingdom.

See, we can't fool our inner self. However much we may fool other people, our inner self knows what we really live for. And Jesus came to change us deep from within.

And he's called us Christians to be a living demonstration in this world of a completely different way of life. Everybody in the world seeks his own interests. It's true.

The entire race of Adam, everywhere around us, we have people, one thing we can say about all of them, some may be drunkards, some may not be drunkards, some may be drug addicts, some may not be drug addicts, some may live very bad, immoral, adulterous lives, and some may live decent lives, but one thing is true about all of them, they all seek their own interests. In that respect, they're all the same. So, a Christian is not just one living a clean life in the midst of adulterous people.

Because there are a lot of people in the world who live clean lives. How is a Christian different from these other people living a clean life? The difference is not between a pure life and adulterous life. No.

The difference is between a bunch of people, everybody seeking after their own interests, and in the midst of that, God has a people who are not seeking their own interests. Who are seeking the glory of God. Who are seeking how to promote the kingdom of God.

Every thought of theirs is, how can my life count for God? How can I bless other people and lead them to God? Okay, it may involve a little sacrifice on my part, it may involve self-denial, it may involve, in the case of the apostles, death. Okay, death. But if it can bless other people and promote the kingdom of God, I'm ready for it.

God is looking for people like that. Those are disciples. The rest are so superficial.

There's a lot of superficial Christianity and discipleship, even among those who consider themselves born-again believers. And that's why their lives are so shallow. And that's why their lives don't count much, because God cannot commit himself to them.

One of the things which I longed for from very early in my Christian life was, not just that I must do something for God, I think a lot of religious people have that, I must do something for God on this earth. No. No.

I wanted God to commit himself to me. It's always been my longing. God, will you commit yourself to me? Will you really commit yourself to me? And I remember many years ago, God gave me this verse.

In Colossians, in chapter 1. In Colossians chapter 1, it says something about God's desire. The Father's desire is. Colossians chapter 1, about concerning Jesus Christ.

That Jesus is the head of the body, the church, and he's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that Christ himself might come to our first place in everything. For it is the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him. That Christ himself, last part of verse 18, might have the preeminence or the first

place in everything.

That is the Father's desire. And what the Lord spoke to my heart through that verse was that if that was my desire also, God would back me in everything. That means if my main aim in life was that Jesus Christ must have the first place in everything, that in a church, Jesus Christ must have the first place in everything, that in my life, Jesus Christ must have the first place in everything, the way I spend my money, the way I spend my time, the way I live my life, Christ must have the first place in everything, then God would back me 100%, because that was his desire too.

But, if I just wanted to live a sort of a decent life and get honor from people that I was a holy man or something like that, even among Christians, but my basic passion in life was not that Christ might have the first place in everything, I wouldn't have God backing me. This is what I mean by superficial Christianity where our life is just a little bit better than the lives of a lot of unbelievers around us and we think we are good people or maybe our church is better than a lot of dead worldly churches around us and our standard of life is a little better. This is not what God is after.

He is not looking to make our church have a little better standard than the standard of life of people around us. Oh, well, those fellows live in adultery. We don't.

And those fellows live in a lot of sin in that church. We don't. What's God looking for in us? That the root of sin, seeking our own interests, is completely eliminated from our lives and that we can demonstrate to this world that we can live a life seeking God's kingdom first and His interests and we don't starve to death.

God provides our needs. That is the type of disciple that God is looking for and the reason why the Lord could do so much. You know, many times I've asked myself this question.

How is it that the Lord could do so much through those apostles? This was the reason. They were totally gripped by living utterly for God, seeking nothing for themselves. Like we read in Philippians.

There were very few like that even in those days. Timothy was the only one among Paul's co-workers who lived like that. And it's the same today.

The reason God cannot commit Himself to many, many, many of His children, even though they are good believers, is because deep down in their heart they have not been delivered from seeking their own interests. And so, my brothers and sisters, if you really want to live that life which is totally pleasing to God, to be the church that is totally pleasing to God, we must be a people who say, Lord, I want You to lay the axe to this self-centered life which is seeking its own all the time. I want my life to be centered in You.

I want to seek Your kingdom first and Your righteousness. I want my decisions to be based on, will this promote Your interest, not will it promote mine. And always the devil will say to you, listen, if you don't seek your own, you're going to lose out on a lot of things on this earth.

You've got to seek your own. And we live in the midst of a world where everybody seeks our own and says, no, I'm not going to seek my own. I'm going to seek God's interest first.

I'm going to put Him first in everything and never seek my own. And I believe that God will provide me everything that I need for my earthly life. He'll take care of me.

He'll take care of my family. And if God has a number of people like that as a living testimony, that is the proof that we have a living God. And our church must be like that too.

A church, not just where people live decent lives, but a church where people are not seeking their own interests. And that's what we should promote in our children as well. That we seek God's interests in all things.

Remember again what the Lord told Peter, get behind me, Satan, because your mind is set on man's interests, not God's. And then you're a stumbling block to me. Those are strong words.

But they come down to us today. Today, if like Peter, my mind is set on man's interests and not God's. Does the Lord say anything different to me? Your mind is set on man's interests, not God's.

I tell you, the vast majority of believers, I'm not talking about unbelievers, the vast majority of believers live seeking their own interests. They have not seen that this is the route to which Jesus came to lay the axe. They're happy that they live a fairly decent life.

Clean life without, you know, they're modestly dressed, and they don't commit adultery, and they're pure morally, and they give a little bit of money for missions and God's work, and they go to church, they read the Bible every day, and they pray. They've never been delivered from seeking their own. Their life is not passionately devoted to seeking God's interests.

And in that sense, we can say they're not disciples of Jesus. And a lot of preachers are afraid to preach this type of thing because it's going to thin their congregations down. And they don't want to preach things that will reduce the size of their congregation because very few people want to live this type of life.

I've shared with the people in our own church, I say, we can count the number of people who sit here in chairs, but do you know whom God's counting from heaven? From this crowd of so many of us sitting here, I say God's looking at those who are passionately devoted to His interests. And out of 200 people, He may find two or three. And so we say we've got 200 people in our church.

God says, no, there are only three there. Quite a difference, isn't it? The way we count all the occupied chairs, and God sees whose hearts are totally devoted to His interests. May God help us.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. You are invited to visit our website on the internet at www.cfcindia.com that is www.cfcindia.com and at www.punan.org forward slash zac that is www.punan.org forward slash zac for video messages, audio messages, and books by Zac Punan that can all be downloaded freely. Our mailing address is If you would like to receive a weekly message by Zac Punan by email, please send us your email address to [cflit at touchtellindia.net](mailto:cflit@touchtellindia.net) that is [cflit at touchtellindia.net](mailto:cflit@touchtellindia.net) The Lord bless you richly.

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