

# (The Works of Faith) Learning to Be Content

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of learning contentment through faith in God's ordained circumstances, highlighting that this education is unique to our earthly experience.*

**Duration:** 1:01:09

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:1-4, Psalm 139:13-16, Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:26, Philippians 4:11-13, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 5:8

**Topics:** "Contentment In Suffering", "Obedience Through Trials"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of embracing suffering and obedience on earth. They warn against avoiding suffering because it can hinder opportunities for spiritual growth and education that cannot be obtained in eternity. The speaker references Philippians 4:11, where Paul states that he has learned to be content in all circumstances, whether in abundance or lack. They highlight the value of learning contentment and not complaining, even in difficult situations. The sermon also mentions Jesus as an example of learning obedience through suffering when he became a man.

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## Transcript

I'd like to turn to a verse in Philippians, in chapter four. Philippians, chapter four. There are a number of places in the New Testament where you see the word, learn.

Learn is a word related to education. In Hebrews five, we read that Jesus learned obedience through the things which he suffered. Did Jesus have to learn something as one who has been Almighty God for eternity? Have to learn something? Yes, when he became a man, because in heaven, God never obeys anyone.

He gives orders. So there was no possibility of learning obedience in heaven. He had to become a man, and when he became a man, he not only learned obedience to God, it says he learned obedience when obedience meant suffering.

Like he had to listen to Joseph and Mary, thirty years, involved a lot of suffering. And he had to obey God when it meant dying on the cross and many other things like that, which meant suffering. There was no possibility of learning obedience through suffering in heaven, because there is no suffering in heaven.

And I want to say to all of you, my brothers and sisters, there are certain things you can only learn on earth, which you cannot learn in heaven. If you missed your education on earth, you've missed it for

eternity. There are a lot of other things we can learn in heaven.

For example, you can learn in heaven how to worship, how to love God better, and many, many things. You can even learn how to serve Him. But you can't learn how to obey when you have to suffer for it in heaven, because that is not one of the subjects there.

There is a lot of education in heaven, all eternity, but one of the subjects is not obedience through suffering. That is a course which is given only on earth. Even Jesus had to come to earth to learn it.

And so those of us who try to avoid suffering on earth because obedience becomes costly, I just want to tell you, I mean, I can't change your mind, but I can warn you that you are losing opportunities to get an education which you'll never get in eternity. Another thing we can learn only on earth is what Paul says here in Philippians 4, verse 11. In the middle of that verse, he says, I've learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

I know how to, let me read the Living Bible, how to live on almost nothing, and I also know how to live with everything. I have learned the secret of contentment in every situation, whether it be a full stomach or hunger, plenty or want, because I can do everything God asks me to do with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power. He says in verse 11, I've learned how to get along happily whether I am much or little.

You cannot learn that in heaven. You cannot learn in heaven how to get along happily with much or little. You cannot learn the secret of contentment in every situation, whether it be a full stomach or hunger, plenty or want.

Only one half of that you can learn in heaven, a full stomach, how to be happy on a full stomach, how to be happy with plenty. The other half of the education you cannot get in heaven. You know, it's like a dosai or a pancake, only fried on one side and the other side is raw.

That's how we'll be if we have not been turned over and not learned how to be happy when we have plenty, how to be happy when we are little, how to be happy when our stomach is full, how to be happy when the stomach is empty, how to be happy when you get what you want, how to be happy when you don't get what you want, how to be happy when your prayers are answered, how to be happy when your prayers are not answered. Everything, there's another side of us which has to be fried properly if we are to be bred fit for God, which can only happen on earth. And I think of lots and lots and lots of people who are missing a very valuable part of their education which they can never, never get.

This course is not offered in heaven. Please remember this, brothers and sisters, this course is not offered in heaven, to learn to be content whatever my circumstances. The opposite of that is to have no complaints at all.

Philippians 2, verse 14, do all things without grumbling or complaining or disputing. That's the opposite of learning to be content in all situations. Now the reason why we are content is because we live by faith.

The righteous man lives by faith. You know that verse, living by faith, we have taught often in this church, is not for full-time workers. That is a wrong concept that Christendom has when a man says, I live by faith.

What do you mean live by faith? Everybody is supposed to live by faith. The Bible says four times in the Bible, three times in the New Testament, once in Habakkuk, that righteous will live by faith. When I live by

faith, I am saying I trust that God has ordained my circumstances.

And if God has ordained my circumstances, I am content. See, Peter was not content in Gethsemane with the circumstances God had ordered of the Roman soldiers coming to capture Jesus. So he fought against those circumstances and Jesus said, No, Peter, put your sword back.

We must be content with our circumstances. The cup which my father has given me, shall I not drink it? How could Jesus say that? Because he lived by faith. He lived by faith, which meant that he believed that a father in heaven, a loving father in heaven, had planned and ordered all the circumstances of his life.

So he would not fight against those circumstances with sword or even with words. He would say to the Roman soldiers, Whom are you seeking? They said, Jesus of Nazareth. He said, I am he.

Take me and let these people go their way. See, that's the man of faith does not want other people to suffer. Remember that? The man of faith does not want other people to suffer.

Jesus in Gethsemane said, If you are seeking me, seek me and let these people go. Peter, when the Lord told Peter, you are going to suffer, you are going to die. You are going to stretch out your hands and die when your own old man looks around at John and says, What about him? That's not living by faith.

That's the opposite of Jesus. If I suffer, he should suffer too. No.

The man of faith accepts his difficult circumstances and rejoices in the comfortable circumstances of another person. Can you do that? Then you have learnt contentment. When you can rejoice to see somebody else having more money than you, a better job than you, a better house than you, a better wife than you, better children than you, better everything than you.

Maybe he has built a house and you are still living in a rented house. The man of faith says, Fine. The man who lives in unbelief and who believes God did not order my circumstances and God did not order his circumstances, will always seek to find some fault in that other person of whom he is jealous.

The man who lives by faith is perfectly content with the gift God has given him in the body. He is not jealous of another person who has got a better gift or another gift. He is perfectly happy with his gift and he exercises his gift and deeply appreciates and values and rejoices in the gift God has given to somebody else.

So contentment is the secret of many, many things. And this is a very, very important area because the first sin that was committed in this universe, the sin of Lucifer was, we can say, basically committed because he was discontent with his circumstances. He thought he could make his circumstances better than what God had made it.

God had made his circumstances excellent. Ezekiel 28 says he was in the Garden of Eden. He was in the Garden of Eden years before Adam ever came there.

And he was the highest of the angels, he was gifted musically, he was very attractive, very good looking, the most intelligent of all created beings, even today, even today the most intelligent of all created beings. And very clever, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty. Even then he was not happy.

Teaching us that even if you become the most powerful leader in the world, the most beautiful person in the world, the richest person in the world, the most musical person in the world, all this the devil was, you

will still not be happy. And one of the things God wants to prove to the devil, and that's why he allows his children to suffer, please understand this, is that I can produce a race of people on this earth, God says, who will be perfectly content even when they don't have all these things. That's why God didn't make everybody equally intelligent.

That's why he didn't make you so intelligent. The most intelligent people in the world are not believers. People with the highest intelligence in the world today, they are not children of God, they are not believers.

The most beautiful, most good looking people in the world are not believers. The richest people in the world, they are not believers. The people in the highest positions, who have accomplished great feats in science are not believers.

Nobel Prize winners are not usually believers. They may be the odd believer among them, but they are not usually believers. Even those who won the Peace Prize are not believers, mostly.

These things mean nothing. God has not made his children great in the eyes of the world, because he is trying to prove something to Satan. Then even if I make some of my children little dumb and stupid, they will be content.

They will not be jealous of the man who is more intelligent. And even if I give some of my children very small houses to live in, they will be content. They will not compare themselves with someone who has more than them.

Have you noticed one thing, brothers and sisters? That the devil always makes you compare yourself with somebody who has more than you. Have you ever found the devil making you compare yourself with somebody who has less than you? If you have a house, you are always wishing you had a house like the other person who has got a bigger house than you. You never walk through the slums and compare yourself with them.

Never. You never compare your children with the children of those who are in the slums. Do you ever do that? No.

You compare your children with other children who are smarter than them or more good looking than them. That makes you jealous. And then you try to tear down those other children with your words.

That shows, please don't get offended, but this is the truth. You are saturated with the devil. Saturated with Satan, no matter what religious language you use.

I'm sorry to say it, but it's true. You'll never hear the truth like you hear it here. You'll get a correct scan of your condition.

Jealousy is 100%. 100%, I wish I could say 200% of the devil. There's not even an atom of God in him.

It comes out from a discontented heart that does not live by faith that God has ordained my circumstance. God determined the level of intelligence in my children. God determined whether my child should be retarded or not.

God determined the color of skin of my children. I have no complaints. Can you honestly say you have no complaints? Can you honestly say as you look into a mirror that you have no complaints about the color of your skin or your height or your size? Not only your height, your length and breadth.

Also, you have no complaints in any dimension. God determined everything perfectly. You are thankful.

To be content is a very, very important thing, my brothers and sisters. Very, very important. Far more important than you think it is.

It's not a weakness, it's an evil. It's the evil which made the most beautiful of all created beings into a devil in a moment. And it will make anybody into a devil today.

I have to learn to be content. It's an education. When we are born into the world, we don't have it.

Little children that are born into the world, they don't even know ABC. They don't know multiplication. But they learn it.

And we are very eager that our children should learn. They should not remain in the same condition they came into the world. None of us want our children to remain in the same condition they were born into the world.

We want them to get an education. In the same way, God wants us to learn. He is a heavenly father.

He wants us to learn contentment. It's more important than getting a degree. To learn contentment, whatever your circumstances.

He says, I have learned how to be plenty, how to have plenty and how to have little. In the Old Testament, in the book of Proverbs, we read these words. Proverbs in chapter 30.

One of the prayers that this man, Agur. Proverbs 30, we read in verse 1, is written by a man called Agur, the son of Jaake. I don't know who he was.

But he prayed a good prayer for the Old Testament, which was not a good prayer for the New Testament. He prayed, in the middle of verse 8, Give me neither poverty nor riches. Don't give me too little, Lord, and don't give me too much.

A lot of believers pray that prayer because they haven't understood the New Covenant. Feed me with food that is my portion, because if I have plenty, I may deny you, Lord, and say, who is the Lord? And if I am in want, I may steal and profane the name of my God. How is it with Jesus? Supposing you gave Jesus a million rupees, would He be in danger of saying, oh, who is the Father? Never.

Even Paul was not in that danger. Even if you gave Him 10 million rupees, Paul wouldn't say, oh, who is God? He would never say it. Supposing you gave Jesus zero, like He had in the wilderness, 40 days without food, would He steal? No.

He would rather die than steal. What about Paul? He would also rather die than steal. But this man says, when I am in want, I may steal.

Is that Old Covenant or New Covenant? You know the answer. This man says, if I have plenty, I'll forget about God. I can show you lots of people on earth today, wholehearted believers who have plenty and who don't forget about God, and who have want, I mean who have a lot of want in their life, needs, and who never steal.

This is not a New Covenant prayer, just for your information. In the New Covenant, it's what we read in Philippians 4, whether I have plenty or have nothing, I'm content. Because I live by faith that a sovereign Father in heaven has determined my lot in life.

He has drawn the boundaries around me, and He has made me exactly like I am to be. This is so, so very important. If we were to start at the beginning, we'd have to turn to Psalm 139.

Because we all began in our mother's womb. And David says, in Psalm 139, in verse 13 and 14 and 15 and 16, I want to read in the Living Bible, You made all the delicate inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank You for making me so wonderfully complex.

It's amazing to think about Your workmanship is marvelous. How well I know it. And You were there, Lord, when I was being formed in my mother's womb in utter seclusion.

You saw me before I was born, and scheduled every day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in Your book. So, particularly if you're a child of God, as David was, we can say, Lord, I accepted You as my Savior, maybe when I was 20, 30, or whatever it is.

But You knew, even when I was in my mother's womb, that I was one of those potential children of God, who one day, after a wayward life, come back to You. You knew that. And knowing that, You formed me in my mother's womb.

You formed my face, my skin, my inner parts. You formed my brain, my intelligence. You gave me natural gifts, even at that time, which would equip me to be a member of the body of Christ.

You determined at that time, whether I should be male or female, man or woman, boy or girl. You determined it because maybe you wanted a girl to fulfill a function in the body of Christ. That's why You made you a girl.

Or He wanted a boy to fulfill a function in the body of Christ. That's why He made you a boy. He wanted a fisherman, not very educated, but very hardworking.

So He made a Peter. He wanted a scholar who could teach the Word. So He made a Paul.

Equip them from the mother's womb with abilities to be fishermen or abilities to be scholars. That was God. When you live by faith, you have no complaints.

Whether He made you a fisherman or a scholar. Whether He allowed you to be born in a poor home like Peter and Andrew or in a slightly wealthier home like James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who, I don't know whether you noticed it, it says Peter and Andrew were fishing themselves. But James and John were fishing with their servants.

They were a little richer. And they came to the gate of the high priest. John could go in, Peter couldn't.

There was a difference in their social level. But God determined that. All were apostles, but God determined that Peter should be a little lower than some of the others.

And Paul was, of course, the son of a very rich businessman in Tarsus. Tremendously wealthy family, grew up with comforts and everything else. God determined all that.

And it's just the same today. He determined a particular task for Peter, a particular task for Paul and from birth they were given that type of task. He allowed Paul to grow up to murder Christians.

Isn't that amazing? Think if God had, think if Jesus had appeared to Paul when he was much younger. Paul was born, by the way, when Jesus was in Nazareth. I don't know where he was, whether he was in Tarsus or Gamaliel school, wherever he was, Jesus was there.

You had never seen him. But he was born. And supposing Jesus had revealed himself to Paul when Paul was 18 or something like that.

Surely, could have been done. God could have arranged circumstances. But he didn't.

Paul would not have been a murderer if Jesus had revealed himself to him when he was 18. But he revealed himself to Paul maybe when he was around 30. By the time he had already murdered and done all types of things.

Persecuted Christians. And when we look at our lives, you and I, we find that the Lord brought us to himself sometimes, after we have made a mess of our lives. He knew that.

And then, he allowed that with a purpose. I think in Paul's case, one of the purposes was so that all through his life all through his life, till the end of his life, he would remember that he was the chief of sinners. That Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repent.

I believe that none of the disciples were fit other than Peter. No one was fit to give that message on the day of Pentecost. Because nobody could have handled that much of blessing and remained humble other than Peter.

Think if you went somewhere to preach. I am not talking about some mature 70 year old man who has walked with God for so many years. Some young fellow like you, 30 years old, walked with God for 3 years.

That's Peter. And you go somewhere to preach, completely heathen people. All heathen.

No nominal Christians, nothing. And from that heathen crowd, in one message, 15 minute message, 3,000 people are converted. I think your head will not be the same size after that.

And they got baptized. And not only that, all 3,000 are baptized in the Holy Spirit also. Boy! I don't know how many of you will be able to manage that.

Why, even if 2 people were converted, I don't know whether we would be able to manage it. Leave alone 3,000. You know what a tremendous thing it was? To have 3,000 people saved, baptized in water, baptized in the Holy Spirit, all in the same day and remain humble at the end of it.

Who could manage it? None of the apostles. Because none of them had fallen so low as Peter. His failure was part of his education.

He was the only man fit to stand there. Because it could not go to his head. When Satan would come to him and whisper to him, Boy! Peter! What you have accomplished, man! He would say, I know what I did 6 weeks ago.

I haven't forgotten that. I denied the Lord, denied the Lord. I pretended as though I didn't even know Jesus.

I loved my own life. I was scared. This has got nothing to do with me.

And then I backslid. I said, I'll never again be an apostle. I'll go back to fishing.

And from there the Lord called me. And when I caught all that fish, And I began to get interested in the fish. And thought I could make a lot of money fishing.

Because I caught 153 fish in one day. The Lord said, No, you got to love me more than these fish. And he pulled me out from all that.

And that's why I'm here today. It's got nothing to do with me. That was the only man fit to serve the Lord on the day of Pentecost.

It's not the person you think is fit to serve the Lord. Who is fit to serve the Lord. You may think you are fit to serve the Lord.

But you are pretty conceited. Even if you bring one soul to Christ, you can't stand it. God doesn't want you to go to hell.

He does not want you to go to hell, so He doesn't bless you. Because blessing, you can't stand blessing. One of the most difficult things for God to do is to bless a person for the man to remain humble.

But the man who has learned contentment in whatever state, he has no problem. Who is content with his gift. Content with his circumstances.

Who is not jealous of anybody else. Who lives by faith that God has arranged my circumstances. God wove me in my mother's womb and gave me certain gifts and abilities.

I want to show you another verse in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17. After we come out of our mother's womb and we have grown up and we decide to get married somewhere, we decide to live somewhere.

It says here in Acts 17, verse 26. God made from one every nation of mankind. That means from Adam.

To live on all the face of the earth. And listen to this. God determined which time in history they should live.

Whether you should be born in the 20th century or the 15th century. Do you know God determined that? Are you thankful you were born in the 20th century and not in the 15th century? I am deeply thankful. I may not have even been saved.

There would have been no CFC in the 15th century. That's for sure. And He also determined which country they should be born in.

And not only which country, which town, which village, which house, which family. The boundaries of their habitation. So there are two things it says here.

God determined. The time I should be born and the place I should be born. The time I should live in and the place I should live in was determined by God.

Therefore, you should have no complaints about the year of your birth. I don't think any of us have any complaint about the year of our birth. We are pretty glad that we were not born 300 years ago when there was no electricity, no running water, no proper toilets.

We had to go into the bushes. I am sure you are happy that it's not like that these days. Now these things which make our life comfortable, we usually have no complaint about.

But other things. What about the circumstances of our birth? The family you were born into. Have you got a complaint against God that He didn't allow you to be born in a richer family? You know when Jesus from heaven for thousands of years, thousands of years, He was planning His own birth.

Which family shall I come into? And He sees the whole future. Remember that. And He chooses a poor carpenter's family where He won't have a room to Himself.

If He had chosen a rich king's family, He would have had a room to Himself. How many of you will choose a house where you can have a room to yourself and instead of that choose a house where you don't have a room to yourself? I mean if we had a choice, we would do things differently. Jesus had a choice and He chose a home where He would have no room to Himself.

He would struggle to live because He did not come to earth to live comfortably. He came to earth to save people. And in order to understand people, He had to live like them.

In order to understand poor people, He had to live like poor people. I remember more than 30, about 35 or 30 something years ago, I was, I remember it very so vividly. I was in Ahmedabad in Gujarat having some meetings for students and I suddenly had to go and change my ticket because I had to.

I was not married those days. I had to come back home. My dad was going for an operation and I had to rush back.

And I had to change my ticket in the middle of two sessions. I had to go and change my ticket and I didn't want to ask somebody else to do it because he would have missed that session. I said, I'll go.

And I went myself and I prayed as I went, Lord, please let the queue be a very short one so that I can quickly change my ticket and come back. And when I went to that railway station, I have never seen such a queue anywhere in my life. It was outside the station.

Boy, well, standing in the sun, and I didn't even, I forgot to take a cap or whatever it is. And as I was standing in that queue, I said, Lord, why? I mean, if ever there was a time you should have answered my prayer, it was now. Because I'm in a rush.

And I haven't come here to make money, I've come here to serve you, for your work. And I'll never forget in all these 35 years where the Lord spoke to my heart. He said that if you avoid all this suffering that your fellow countrymen go through, you'll never be able to minister to them effectively.

I said, thank you, Lord. I have never forgotten that word. And so, I have learned to be content when there are long queues.

I've learned to be content sitting on the floor of crowded, unreserved, second class compartments traveling somewhere to preach the gospel. I've learned to be content when people made reservations for me and forgot to make reservations for me. And I couldn't get a berth.

I've learned to be content no matter what. And I found that helped me in my ministry. I think I told you once how 22 years ago I was invited to speak in a large convention.

And they got offended with me after two days. They didn't want me to speak the third day. They told me, we are offended.

We don't want you to speak the third day. I said, okay, praise the Lord. So I sat on the platform the third day and kept quiet.

They got the other fellow, some American preacher to speak. And then at the end, that was the end of the convention. And they would not even send me in the car to the bus stop, which is many miles away.

I said, fine, praise the Lord. So I had to take a bus to go to that main bus terminus. I didn't know my way around there and I got into the wrong bus.

Well, praise the Lord, must be some reason. And that bus had a puncture and I had to get into another bus. Praise the Lord.

I did praise the Lord, even there. I was determined, I am not going to complain. And then they said, the conductor said, you got to get into this bus, you go to the other place.

So I took this bus and went to another place where I changed the bus. And there I was waiting for the other bus and the other bus came and I got in and it was jam-packed. And I stood there and lo and behold, in front of me, there was a young brother.

And he was just coming from this huge convention where he had heard me speak for two days. And we had wonderful fellowship, just about five, ten minutes. But that was the result, that resulted in a permanent relationship, the value of which I have seen more in the last seven or eight months in Kerala than before.

That's brother Joseph Matthew. I mean the responsibility God has given him in Kerala now for all those churches. It began way back there.

I see that God does not give us comfort always, nor acceptance. But I believe that if I had grumbled and complained, today I am very thankful that those fellows didn't give me that car. Think what I would have missed if they had taken me in the car.

I am very thankful for that bus that I got into the wrong bus. I am very thankful that I missed the right way. And God doesn't always give us comfort.

He never gave his son, Jesus, comfort. He never gave Paul comfort. There were times when Paul was hungry.

There were times when Paul shivered in the cold. He says that in 2 Corinthians 11. He tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, please bring that blanket which I left behind there.

I forgot to bring it with me here. I am shivering in this Roman dungeon. I don't have the money to buy another one.

Please bring it. Who is this? This is the greatest apostle that the world has ever seen. Does God treat his greatest servants like that? See, God is not like some multinational corporation that gives all types of

perks to CEOs and to the managing directors.

Because he is interested in developing character. And sometimes character can be developed only through struggle, and poverty, and difficulty, and trial. You have seen how children who have grown up in homes where there is, they have to work, they have to struggle.

They don't have everything that other children have. Such children develop character. And all the other children who get everything from day one, all the wealth and comforts of the world, they don't develop character.

They are spoiled. And even the world recognizes that. I remember once seeing a believer, a young person who told me that, it was a young sister who told me that in all her life she had never walked to any place.

She had always gone in a car. Would you like to live like that? I don't want my children to grow up like that. They are spoiled.

They are spoiled for this world. They are certainly spoiled for any ministry for the Lord. Learn to be content, my brothers and sisters.

God has not made a mistake in the boundaries of your habitation. God has not made a mistake in the time period in which you lived. Like I said, one mark of being content is that you will not complain.

What's the opposite of complaining? The opposite of complaining is being thankful. Complaining comes from our mouth. Thankfulness comes from our mouth.

Contentment is in the heart. Discontentment is in the heart. When there is discontent, we complain.

When we are content, the proof of that is, we give thanks. What do you do when you get an unexpected promotion in your job? Or an unexpected 500 rupee bonus in your increment in your salary? Or an unexpected 10,000 rupee bonus? What do you do? You give thanks. The true disciple of Jesus gives thanks even if he has lost 500 rupees per month's salary.

That's the difference between the disciple of Jesus and any worldly person. Any stupid, unconverted, godless worldly person can give thanks when he gets some benefit. It's only a godly disciple of Jesus who can give thanks even when there is loss.

So, your spirituality is not tested when you gain. When you gain, we can't find out whether you are different from other people. It's when you lose that you find out whether you are a disciple of Jesus or not.

If you have plenty of money, well, we don't know how much character there is in you. Because your thankfulness and even your helpfulness and your kindness to other people and even your giving money to the poor or for God's work. I don't think that's good.

It's a very good thing but I don't think it's all that great. Because there are a lot of other people in the world who also are equally rich as you are who also give. They give to their temples.

There are businessmen who build huge temples. I mean, none of us have built a church building by ourselves. There are businessmen who build whole temples, mosques with their money.

So, that doesn't prove anything because they got plenty. It's when that widow gave two mites that Jesus appreciated and said, that's really amazing. So, when we have plenty, your giving for God's work and to the poor is good.

I'm not depreciating it. I think, you know, through the years we have been able to have so many conferences here. One conference in Bangalore costs one lakh.

Approximately. Through the years we have been able to have conferences without ever taking an offering in 27 years because certain brothers who are well off have given. So, I'm not despising it at all.

All I'm saying is that does not test whether you are content. That's what I'm saying. Contentment is tested when you don't have and you give thanks.

Sacrifice is tested when you don't have much and you give for the Lord's work. So, to give thanks in all circumstances is one of the primary marks that you are, evidences that you are content. And that's why always giving thanks for everything is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

Turn to Ephesians chapter 5, Ephesians 5, always, verse 20, always, that means at all times, giving thanks for all things, that means all circumstances, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God, even the Father. Who can do this? Verse 18, only one who is filled with the Holy Spirit. Why do we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit? To always give thanks for all things.

Speaking in tongues is one way of giving thanks. But you can give thanks in English or Tamil or Malayalam or Telugu or any language, Kannada. But the principle is always giving thanks.

That is what should happen when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You come into a life where you always give thanks for all things. In other words, you come into a life of contentment.

You don't compare your lot with anybody else's, except perhaps those who are worse off than you. If your children are not very clever, if they come last in the class, OK, if you want to compare yourself, children, compare your children with those who are retarded, who can't even go to school. And give thanks.

Give thanks not only because you are better off than other people. That's a poor way of giving thanks, but that's a good place to begin. But you give thanks because God has determined exactly how you should be, your children, your family, your circumstances.

And I believe we must teach our children also to be thankful for their circumstances. To tell them, when they want something, I'm sorry, I can't buy that for you. I know that that brother can buy that for his children, but God has not arranged our circumstances in that way.

We are not jealous. We are very glad that that brother can buy that for his children. But, you say, I'm sorry my son, my daughter, I can't buy that for you.

God has, in His great wisdom, allowed our circumstances to be different, because He wants to do something different with us. We are special. Every family is special.

That family is special, God deals with them in one way. We are special to God, so God deals with us in another way. Think if you can teach your children that.

That's the greatest thing you can teach your children. That they never compare themselves with others. That they don't come to the meeting and see what type of shoes that girl is wearing or that boy is wearing and come back and say, I want that.

And then you don't know what to do because you can't afford that money. Tell them. The greatest thing is not to have shoes of that type or that make.

The greatest thing is to have contentment. And if you don't learn contentment, what's the use? So, little little things like this. See, you are not as spiritual.

Some of you young people may think you are very spiritual. But if you are always coveting somebody else's shoes and somebody else's type of clothes, I want to tell you to your face, you are not as spiritual as you think. And I think I have to say that to a lot of people.

My dear brother, sister, you are not as spiritual as you think you are. I am sorry to disappoint you this morning. Nice morning, but sorry to disappoint you with that message and send you home.

But it's the truth. You are not as spiritual as you think you are. You better face up to it.

It's like a doctor saying, well, my friend, you are not as healthy as you appear. Your blood report shows you are not as healthy as you thought you were. You better do something about it.

You better change your lifestyle. You listen to a doctor. Can't you listen to me this morning? You are not as spiritual as you think you are.

You are not as spiritual as you look. No. Do something about it.

Change your lifestyle. Like the doctor says, don't eat all that stuff. It's not good for your health.

I'd say, don't read all that stuff. Today we eat with our eyes. Through books and televisions and movies I'd say, don't eat all that stuff.

It's not good for you. Change your lifestyle. Because you are not as healthy as you think you are.

You are not so healthy and on top of that you eat all that stuff with your eyes. Oh, what will happen to you? You will die before your time. I am just telling you exactly what doctors tell people every day.

Learn to give thanks for all things. Be happy with the circumstances God has arranged for you. With the income that your father receives which limits him in how much he can buy for you.

Don't make life miserable for your parents by saying, I want this, I want this, I want this. Like a spoiled child. And come to the meeting and say, oh, how I love Jesus.

It's a lot of garbage. If you love Jesus, love Jesus at home. And don't pester your parents for this, that and the other which you see somebody else has.

Sing it at home, oh, how I love Jesus. My dear brothers and sisters, this is one of the great secrets of the Christian life. To learn to be content.

I want to say one more thing before I finish and that is in Colossians in chapter 3 it says in verse 11, that there are all types of people in the body of Christ. There are Greeks and Jews. Totally different views on

religious matters.

There are circumcised and uncircumcised. The barbarians, barbarians are the really wild people. You know, no manners, no civilization and the Scythians are worse than them.

Just in case you thought barbarians were bad. So you have Greeks and barbarians and Scythians. Slaves and free men.

But Christ is all. And verse 15, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. To which indeed you were called in one body with all this funny bunch of people and it says here be thankful for all of them.

You get it? Okay. As you look around in this church, you see some Greeks and some barbarians and you thought they were bad till you see the Scythians. And say God has chosen them.

And I'll tell you this, if you have not learned to be thankful for the brothers and sisters God has placed you with in a local church, you are not going to go very far in your spiritual growth. God has determined the boundaries of your habitation. He allowed you either to be born here in Bangalore, in this particular area or to get a job here.

Whatever the way may be, today your address is Bangalore. Your pin code is 5600 whatever it is. Okay, that God determined that.

And God determined that you should be in this church. You should come here, you should hear the word. Are you happy here? Are you happy with the Greeks and the barbarians and the Scythians? And the uncircumcised and the circumcised people with different views says be thankful.

Are you thankful for the place where God has placed you? Or you're always sitting here, complaining. You got something against this brother, something against that sister, something against this person. Are you always wishing you were somewhere else? That's why I said in the beginning, you are not as spiritual as you think you are.

The scan report says something else. If you have learned to be thankful in this church, maybe God will do something for you. But if you're not thankful for somebody here, somebody rubs you the wrong way, somebody is not up to your expectations.

Some preacher does not preach up to your expectations. You're not thankful. Brother, you should go to some other church and see what it's like over there.

You'll come running back and say okay, okay, this is enough for me. How quickly we complain. Be thankful.

Be thankful, brother, sister, for the body of Jesus Christ, the local body of Jesus Christ where God who determined your present boundaries has placed you. Maybe one day he'll take you somewhere else, that's fine. But you'll never be a blessing anywhere if you're not going to be a blessing here.

There are people who say, if I get a job, this place where I work, I can't be a Christian. If only I get a job there, I can be a disciple of Jesus. No! If you can't be a disciple where you are, you won't be a disciple there also.

Be content. Now if you find your job uncomfortable, okay. The Bible says if you're a slave and you can get freedom, get freedom.

But if you can't get freedom, learn to be thankful where you are. 1 Corinthians 7. And if you're not happy in a church, go and find another church where you are happy. But don't complain.

That is never permitted by God. God does permit you to leave a church and join another church. To leave an office, get a job in another office.

But never to complain. The one thing he doesn't permit you to leave is your wife and husband. Sorry, you're stuck with that for life.

Just learn to give thanks with whomever God's given you. But church, house, office, you're not happy with one house, move to another house, no problem. Office, you're not happy one job, move to another job.

But wherever you are, once you finally decided on the perfect house and the perfect job and the perfect church, be happy. But don't complain. Don't complain.

Just by the way, you won't find the perfect church or the perfect house or the perfect job. That sort of P.S. I write at the bottom. But if you learn to be thankful, that will become the perfect place for you.

That's what I've discovered. Learn to be content. Let's pray.

Let's make sure that what we heard today is not just a pep talk or a brief message that we forget in a few days. Let's actively do something about the lack of thankfulness, the ingratitude, the lack of appreciation for all the good that you received, whether it's from the church or from your wife or your husband or a brother or sister or anyone. Learn to be grateful.

Be content. All lack of contentment is due to pride which makes you feel you deserve much more than you have. Let's acknowledge.

Lord, I discovered today I'm not as spiritual as I thought I was. But I want to be. I want to be a spiritual man, a spiritual woman.

Please help me. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. Give me a genuine, a genuine baptism in fire and the Holy Spirit.

A genuine baptism in fire. That's the only solution. It's not a change of thinking or positive thinking or any of that rubbish.

It's a baptism in fire. Pray for that and don't give up till God baptizes you in fire and the Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word.

Help us to honor you in our daily life, to please you. We pray in Jesus' name. If you would like to receive a weekly message by Zak Poonen by email, please send us your email address to cfclit at touchtellindia.net. That is cfclit at t-o-u-c-h-t-e-l-l-i-n-d-i-a.net. The Lord bless you richly.

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