

Walking In The Light In Honesty

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of staying faithful to God and avoiding spiritual decline. It highlights the need to listen to God daily, confess to the devil that he was defeated on the cross, walk in humility, and separate from darkness. The message draws parallels from Genesis 1, showing how God transforms us from darkness to light through the Holy Spirit and His Word, leading us to be in the likeness of Christ.

Scripture: Genesis 1:2, 2 Corinthians 4:6, 2 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Revelation 12:11, Romans 10:9

Topics: "Faithfulness to God", "Transformation from Darkness to Light"

Description

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Transcript

Okay, we were seeing yesterday how things that started well declined very quickly. And that begins with Adam and Eve. They started so well in perfection and drifted away from God so soon.

And we saw that how in the times of Joshua after his generation, the next generation drifted away. The same thing with Paul. And that's happened, as I said, throughout Christian history that a group begins well, really seeking to follow the Lord.

They've come out of dead systems. And then over a period of time, maybe 40, 50, 70 years, they decline. And then they live on a name.

They don't have a life anymore. And that's happened throughout history through numerous church groups. So how do we ensure it doesn't happen to us? Every group, when they look back at the history of the Christian church, and they saw all this decline, and you know what they said? It won't happen to us.

And it happened to them. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 12 to 14, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. That's a warning, 1 Corinthians 10, verse 12.

So it's very easy. When the moment you begin to think, yeah, yeah, it won't happen to me, that's the time we are in danger of falling. And the only way to escape from falling is first of all, to acknowledge that we

are capable of falling if God doesn't hold us.

We cannot stand on our own strength. One of the first things we need to recognize, and that is humility. One of the major parts of humility is to acknowledge that I cannot remain faithful if God doesn't support me.

Or to use an example, it's very simple. It's like a branch in a tree, an apple tree. And the branch saying, I can never produce any fruit if the tree doesn't supply sap to me.

And we all understand that. And no matter how many years of experience that branch has, the moment the sap stops flowing in, the branch dries up, no more fruit. I have seen that happen to some wonderful Christians who were like fresh branches in Christ once.

A few years later, they've dried up and then they're like the branch falls off the tree, they have fallen away from Christ. Exactly the same thing happens. And it always happens because of pride.

So humility is to recognize I can do nothing without Christ. It's impossible. There are two statements we need to make.

We must always, not with our lips, but with our heart. Let me tell you those two statements. The first is in John 15, the confession of our life.

I'm not so much interested in the confession of our lips. That is important. But more than the confession of our lips is the confession of our life.

The Pharisees had a confession with their lips, but it was not a confession from their life. So John 15, Jesus said, he's using the same example of a branch in a tree in verse five, and says, apart from me, you can do nothing. Nothing.

Not something, not a few things, zero. Now, do you really believe that even if you had many years of experience as a Christian, like many of you already have, that now you can sort of live on your own without the same dependence on Christ that you had some years ago? That is pride. And I think because of all these years of experience, now I'm not like those new believers who came in yesterday to Christ.

No, no, no, I've got experience. I'm not gonna fall. That's the guy who's gonna fall first.

And the more we walk with the Lord, I'll tell you from my own experience, the more I walk with the Lord, the more I feel that I'm absolutely convinced I cannot do anything apart from Christ. All the time, even when I speak, I'm like a branch depending on the Lord for the sap to flow through me, and then the fruit will come. It's like that.

See, the branch doesn't struggle to produce an apple. It's very restful. It just rests in the branch.

And it's very important for all of us, my brothers and sisters, to come into that life where we have learned to live in simple faith, in dependence upon the Lord, and where we never have high thoughts about ourselves, no matter how much we have grown or how much God has blessed us or how much better we are than everybody else. It makes no difference. The moment pride comes in, it's like, you know, it's a law.

So anyway, I'll come to that. First of all, the first confession is, apart from Christ, I can do nothing. 50 years from now, I'll be able to do nothing.

100 years from now, I'll be able to do nothing apart from Christ, John 15, verse five. The second confession is the opposite of that. Philippians 4, 13.

Philippians 4, 13. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. This is the opposite.

It's the other side of the coin. Like a coin, a coin has got nothing on the other side. It's fake.

A coin has got something printed on both sides. And one side is, apart from Christ, I can do nothing. And the other is, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

You know, whenever you face a situation which looks like difficult and impossible, you need to say, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. You face a very provocative situation in your home or in your office or the church. So I face so many situations like that in my life.

When I was in the Navy as a young believer and much more as with all these different churches and the problems that can arise in churches. I say, I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me. In fact, I need to remind myself of that all the time.

So I have this verse in front of me all the time. I keep it in front of my, just below my computer. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I need to remind myself of that all the time. And I keep it in front of me. You don't need a fancy picture.

You can write it on a piece of paper and keep it in front of you. The important thing is to remind yourself all the time. And sometimes the verse in front of us reminds us.

If some situation comes up, ah, I can handle that through Christ who strengthens me. There's no situation in your life. I don't know what you guys are facing or what you will face tomorrow or next year.

If you can be established in this truth, apart from Christ, you can do nothing. And with Christ, you can handle every situation you can ever face. Now I say that boldly now, because I've got enough experience to see how he strengthened me through all that is amazing situation.

You'll be amazed to hear some of the things the Lord led me through. And I have the faith that because he's done all this so far, I know that from now until the time Jesus comes, I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me. I'm looking forward to the coming of Christ.

And until that day, I can do every single thing that God wants me to do. And sometimes it's very demanding things that the Lord expects from me. Sometimes there are serious problems in some churches and I need to have wisdom to handle it.

And I say, Lord, I don't have it. Like some of you may have problems in your homes. And what do you do? Say, Lord, I can do everything.

I can't do anything without you. But if I depend on you, this problem can be solved. Or sometimes you may have problems with your children.

What are you gonna do? Isn't it wonderful to have Jesus there to help you? You know, if you have a church full of such people who confess these two things, apart from Christ, I can do nothing. And with Christ, I can do all things. You have a very strong church.

It's not just the church is about a lot of good music and a lot of good preaching. See, today there's more preaching available on the internet than any time in human history. There was never a time in history when people could hear so many sermons and so many false teachings.

The internet is flooded with false teachings. And if you don't have discernment, you will listen to the wrong thing. And some of those preachers are very convincing.

And especially those who do these fake miracles, like magic shows. You know that a magic show is not real. That guy is just fooling you on that platform when he does a magic show.

And some of these preachers today, what they call healings are just magic shows, just fooling you. But the number of believers who are fooled. Now, I believe in healing.

I've experienced it in my life. I've seen when praying to people, people heal. But I also know that everybody is not healed.

And I also believe that God wants us to use medicine. So I'm not one of these people who say that everybody who's sick will be healed. Such a person has got to find a verse in the Bible for it.

It's not there. The Old Testament gospel is a gospel of healing and prosperity. The New Testament gospel is a gospel of spiritual healing and spiritual prosperity in the heart.

So, remember these two verses I told you, the two sides of a coin. Apart from Christ, you can do nothing. And with Christ, you can do everything.

Please remember these two verses, John 15, 5, Philippians 4, 13, and memorize them and confess them often, especially when you're in a tight spot or a difficult situation. You know, it could be a difficult situation financially. It could be a difficult situation in the home or in your job or anything.

Say, Lord, with your help, I can handle this. Confess it. You know, we mustn't only believe with our mouth.

That's another thing I want to tell you. Our faith becomes stronger when we confess it. Don't just keep your faith secret in your heart.

I don't mean confess to people. That's a good thing when you get an opportunity. I'm not saying you should go around witnessing to everybody you see.

But if you're playing in a place of work, be always available. And say, Lord, I'm always available to be a witness for you. If you open a door, I'll confess you.

But I'm not going to go around giving a tract to everybody I meet or to witness to everybody I see. They'll get fed up of me. That's a bad testimony.

I don't see Jesus doing it. I don't see the apostles doing it. But to be available.

I'm not asking you to witness to everybody you meet, but I'm asking you, say, Lord, be available. Help me to be available. And if you open a door, I'll take it and share something.

So, but here is something which we must do, which we must confess with our mouth. See, let me first of all show you Revelation chapter 12. I want to show you two verses about confession.

The importance of confession with our mouth. In Revelation chapter 12, it speaks about Satan. He is called with two titles.

We saw one of them, I think, yesterday. Revelation 12, nine. He's called the deceiver of the whole world.

That includes you and me because we're in the world. He tries to deceive us. We don't get deceived because the Holy Spirit keeps us in the light.

The other title given to him in verse 10 is he's called the accuser of our brethren. Read those verses. I want to teach you all a very good habit.

When you read a verse in a book you're reading, for example, every book that I've written, you'll have plenty of verses. Every page, any page you turn to on this side or that side, there'll be a verse of scripture. And if you get into the habit of looking at those scriptures you become familiar with the Bible.

A lot of lazy people hear a verse, they never look it up in the Bible. 50 years later, they are ignorant of the Bible and their life is shallow because they are too lazy to look up that verse in the Bible. Develop the habit of looking it up.

In the early days when I was trying to improve my English, if I read a word somewhere in the newspaper or somewhere else which I didn't know, I would put that paper down and take a dictionary, see what's the meaning of that. So today when I read some message somewhere and they quote a verse and I say, hey, I don't know that verse. I put that message down and I turn to the Bible and look for that verse.

That's how I have become familiar with the Bible. Now I wanna encourage all of you to become familiar with the Bible. It'll help you tremendously in the long run.

See how eagerly those of you who go to work seek to be familiar with your own job, otherwise you lose your job. You need to be more familiar with the Bible than with the job you're doing. Revelation 12, verse 11, he's called the accuser of the brethren.

And it says here, there are a certain group of people in those days who overcome Satan. And how would they overcome him? Verse 11, first of all, by the blood of the Lamb. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

But the Bible says, 1 John 1, 7, that it's only if you walk in the light, 1 John 1, 7. If you walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin. Otherwise it doesn't cleanse you. If you hide something in your life, you will not be cleansed.

Never try to hide anything from God. You can hide things from God, you can hide things from people, that's okay. But don't ever hide anything from God.

That means don't pretend. Because you can't hide anything. He knows, in any case, he sees everything.

Why do you have to pretend that you didn't do that or you didn't have that attitude? You can fool people saying, no, no, no, I didn't do that, or I didn't think like that. But God says, don't try to fool me. Walk in the light means be honest.

Do you know that the only thing that Jesus required from people when he was on earth was that they should be honest? That's what it means to walk in the light. It's not a difficult thing. You don't have to be a

believer for 20 years to be honest.

A sinner can be honest. You remember the Samaritan woman? In John four, Jesus said, go and bring your husband. Have you read that carefully? Let me tell you, I don't have time to turn to it.

Read it sometime in John four. The Samaritan woman, Jesus came and sat at the well to meet her and said, go and call your husband. Now that woman had divorced five husbands.

Jesus still loved her. And is now living with a man with whom she was not legally married. She could have easily, she didn't know Jesus was a prophet.

She could have easily said, just wait, wait, sir. I'll go and bring my husband. And she could have brought that man she was living with and said, here's my husband.

How would this strange man, whoever he was, she could say, how would she know whether this is my husband or not? I'm living with him. But they were not legally married. They were not publicly married.

Living together doesn't mean you're married. And that passage in John four makes it very clear. Today, a lot of people live together and say it doesn't matter.

Well, it does matter because Jesus distinguished between those who were married and those who were living together when he spoke to the Samaritan woman, very clearly. And that woman did not do that. She didn't go and bring that man because that was not her husband.

And she said, honestly, I have no husband. You read that in John four. And Jesus said to her, you have spoken the truth.

He was honest. And so her sins were forgiven. Five divorces were forgiven like that.

And God began to witness, use her as a witness in Samaria. You read the end of the chapter. The whole town came out to listen to Jesus because of the witness of this one woman.

You believe God can use a five times divorced woman? He used that woman more than he uses a lot of believers, proud believers today. Why? Because she was honest. She could have pretended that that was her husband.

And when Jesus said, you have had five husbands, he knew he was a prophet. And she was then thankful that she didn't try to fool him. And he said, the one you're now living with is not your husband.

So she was forgiven because she was honest. And she was a terrible sinner. What are the difference between the two thieves on the cross? One was honest.

Honest, that is the only difference. The other fellow said, Lord, bring me down from the cross. The other fellow, the person on the right side, he didn't say bring me down from the cross.

He knew he deserved it. He just said, Lord, remember me. And it's very important for us to learn that the most important thing God wants from us is not holiness or victory over sin first, but truthfulness.

You will make great progress in your life if you are always truthful. And that's why when my children were small at home, I had four boys, they're all following the Lord today, by God's grace. But there were two things I emphasized when they were at home and they were small.

I didn't care if they accidentally broke something or if they fought with each other, they had all children fight, but only they were not allowed to hit each other. They could speak verbally, that's all. The moment if anyone touched another, I would intervene.

Make them go and lie down in bed or take a time out or something. But otherwise, children argue and all of those things. But there are two things I emphasize.

One, never speak disrespectfully to your parents or to anyone older than you, even if it's a servant woman or a beggar. You know, we have a lot of beggars who come to the gate. Don't be rude to a beggar and shout and say, get away.

No, that person's older than you. Be respectful, just because he's lower in society and he's a beggar. One of the first things I taught, be respectful to people who are older than you.

And I see them today, they are 40, 50 years old today. They still are respectful to people who are older than them. Teach your children to be respectful to parents, to those who are older than them.

And the second thing I taught them was never tell a lie. I don't care if it's the biggest calamity you, problem you created, come and tell me the truth. I'll forgive you.

But don't you dare tell me a lie because I'll find out. And you think my children grew up without telling lies? There's no child in the world that grows up without telling lies. Psalm 58 says, all children tell lies.

But they got out of it quickly because I was very strict on it. I said, don't you ever try to deceive me. And I'm very thankful that I emphasize these two things.

You guys who bring up your children, please emphasize these two things. They must speak respectfully to you as parents and to others who are older than them. And I see so many Christian young people nowadays who call older people by their first name.

Hi, so-and-so. That older person is double the age of this young fellow and he calls him by his first name. There's no respect there.

This is the world we're living in. You let your children grow up like that, I tell you, they'll be disrespectful to God one day. And they'll drift away from God, so be careful.

So be very careful to teach your children to speak the truth. That Samaritan woman spoke the truth. And so she was forgiven.

So the blood of the lamb, we read in Revelation 12, 11, cleanses only those who speak the truth. Otherwise they're not cleansed. If you walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses you.

But the other thing we see here is, in Revelation 12, 11, please look here, they overcame Satan. How did they overcome Satan? By the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. Now, whenever we read the word testimony, we immediately think that means getting up in the meeting and testifying, I have accepted Christ as my savior, or this is the word the Lord gave me yesterday.

All that is good. But that is not the testimony spoken of here. Here, the context is Satan.

Here it is speaking about overcoming Satan. They overcame Satan by the blood of Jesus Christ and by the word of their testimony to Satan. There's a lot of difference between your testifying in a Sunday meeting for all the other believers to hear and you're testifying to Satan.

You won't overcome Satan if you don't testify to him. It says here they overcame him by the word of their testimony to Satan. Have you ever spoken to Satan? Has Satan ever spoken to you? Of course he has.

Who's the one who puts some bad thoughts into your mind? Who's the one who tells you to be bitter against somebody else? Who's the one who tells you not to forgive somebody? Who's the one who tells you to lust after some woman? Who's the one who tells you to be unrighteous in money matters or sign a false statement? The devil's always speaking to God's people. Who's the one who accuses you, saying you're good for nothing? Who's the one who keeps on telling you, I know you prayed and confessed your sin, but you're not forgiven, you're not forgiven. Who's the one who tells you that and makes you feel condemned? The devil.

He's always speaking to you. How are you gonna overcome him? You gotta speak back to him. You have to learn, even you young people, to speak back to Satan and tell him to his face, Satan, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me.

When he reminds you of some terrible thing you did maybe five years ago or yesterday, but you confessed it, turn to him and say, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me, Satan. You got no power over me. Even much older godly men, I remember, I think it was Martin Luther or some godly old man 500 years ago who was much used by God and the devil was harassing him, reminding him of all the terrible sins he had done in his life.

Just like he reminds you and me of what we did years ago. And this man of God just kept quiet and the devil kept him running. You know, you remember did this five years ago and you remember you did that 20 years ago and you did this and nobody knows it, but you did this, you did this, you did this.

This man listened and finally he said, Satan, that's not all. I've done a lot more than that. Make the list complete.

And when you have made the list complete, you can write across the whole thing. The blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed me from all sin. And the devil didn't trouble him after that.

Speak to the devil. Tell him that the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed you from all sin and don't let him keep on harassing you, reminding you of sins that you have already confessed 100 times. Have you confessed some sin 100 times? I have, because I felt so bad about it till I knew that I had to confess it only once.

You don't have to confess a sin 100 times. God's got good hearing. I'll tell you that.

You don't have to tell him 100 times. He says, I know that. You told me that 100 times already.

Forgiven long ago. Then who keeps reminding you of it? The devil. The word of your testimony concerning the blood of Christ.

That's what it says here. Then you overcome it. So the confession is very important.

Now turn with me now to Romans chapter 10. Here it says, Romans chapter 10, verse eight. What does the word of God say? The word is near you.

The word is in your heart and in your mouth. The word of faith which you are preaching. So, listen to this.

How to be saved? Question is, how to be saved? How to be saved from the accusations of Satan? How to be saved from self-condemnation? From discouragement? Here's the answer. Romans 10, nine. Believe in your heart.

Confess with your mouth. God has raised him from the dead. You will be saved.

You believe in your heart and you don't confess with your mouth. Well, you won't experience that salvation. Next.

You know, in electricity, you always see wiring. There are two wires. You can't have electricity wiring in your house with just one wire.

You always need two wires. And those two wires are brought to a switch. And when the switch is off, those two wires don't touch.

All that you do when you put on a switch is make those two wires touch. The light comes on. But if those two points, those two wires are even one millimeter apart, there's no light.

And they touch, the light comes on. You believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. When they touch, you're saved.

Like that. Please remember that illustration. You'll never get electricity with just one wire.

And if you just believe in your heart, that's not enough. It says believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. First of all, to the devil.

Tell, get into the habit of telling the devil, Satan, you can't touch me. You were defeated on the cross. This is so important.

And you know, the devil doesn't like to hear it. I'll tell you something that happened in my home many years ago. Some sister from our church brought another lady who was having some problems.

She was not converted and nominal Christian and said they wanted prayer. And so they brought this lady and my wife and I were sitting there in the sitting room. And so I told this lady, please give your heart to Christ and trust him.

He died for your sins and receive him as your savior. And she said, yes, yes, yes. I said, now tell the devil, you were defeated on the cross.

Speak to the devil, he's been harassing you all this time. And you know what happened? You opened her mouth and looked at me and her face all twisted and said, I was not defeated on the cross. Ooh, that was a demon inside her.

I didn't realize that. I thought she was just an unconverted unbeliever, but she was a demon possessed woman. She looked very normal.

But when I said to her, tell the devil you were defeated on the cross, she turned around to me and said, I was not defeated on the cross. Well, I stopped speaking to her. I spoke to the demon inside her.

I said, you demon Satan, you were defeated on the cross. Jesus defeated you on the cross. Get out of her right now in Jesus name.

The demon left. And I told that lady, now tell the devil, what is this, 15 seconds later, tell the devil you were defeated on the cross. And she said, approved, the demon had gone.

Just like Jesus, you know, Jesus would tell a demon to go and do so. Any believer can do that if you walk in the light. If the devil knows that your conscience is clear and you know that he was defeated on the cross, you have authority, God's given us authority over Satan.

So it's very important that we confess with our mouth. I always tell people, tell the devil you were defeated on the cross. Jesus is my savior.

Confess, even if you don't have boldness to confess in the church meeting, confess to the devil, very important. So we believe in our heart and confess with our mouth. And then it says, we will be saved.

Now, I want you to turn now to Genesis and chapter one. The first paragraph of the Bible, you read here in the first paragraph of the Bible, something very interesting. In the beginning, God created heaven and the earth, and the earth was shapeless, empty, dark.

Has that ever puzzled you when you read that? I know for a long time it puzzled me. Does God create anything shapeless, empty, and dark? God is light, it says there later on. Then how did it become shapeless, empty, and dark? In the same way that there are thorns and wild animals on the earth today, which were not there in Genesis chapter two.

You know, in Genesis chapter two, when God created the animals and the trees and the plants, there was not a single thorn, there was not a single wild animal, not a single poisonous snake anywhere in the world. How did the world become so bad? Because of man's sin. The moment Adam sinned, the earth was cursed.

Thorns and wild animals became wild, all types of problems came because of sin. God did not create, when you look around and you see, God did not create the world like this. So when you go back to Genesis one, you say something must have happened between verse one and two, which made the earth formless, shapeless, and empty, because God didn't create it like that.

Then you say, what is it that happened there? Why isn't it mentioned there? Well, I'll tell you where it is mentioned. What happened there was one of the angels whom God had created, the head of the angels, sinned and became the devil. He was the head of the angels at one time.

And you say, why isn't it mentioned here? Because this book was not written for angels. This book was written for man. And so man's history comes in the first chapter.

And later on, the devil, God tells us about what happened to the devil in Ezekiel 28. Turn with me to Ezekiel in chapter 28. I hope you all know where Ezekiel is.

Teach your children to know where the books of the Bible are. Ezekiel chapter 28. We read here about the Lord telling someone in verse 14, you were the anointed cherub or angel who guards my earth.

He's speaking to the devil here. And he says, in verse 12, you have the seal of perfection. Speak to the king of Tyre.

The king of Tyre was the devil who was inside the earthly king. You had the seal of perfection, wisdom and perfect. You were in Eden.

Now the earthly king of Tyre was not in Eden. He's talking about the devil who was in the garden of God once upon a time. And he was the anointed cherub, verse 14, in the holy mountain of God, perfect.

And it says here, verse 15, you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, without any blame until one day, unrighteousness came. What is that unrighteousness? Verse 17, your heart was lifted up because of your beauty and your wisdom and your splendor. See, this was the head of the angels called the anointed angel.

And when he saw how beautiful he was, he became proud of it. When he saw that he was cleverer than all the other angels, he became proud of it. And when he saw he was the head of all the angels, he became proud of that.

There were three things the anointed angel became head of, it's important for you to know it. His beauty, his cleverness and his position. These are usually the things that men are proud of too.

Their good looks, their cleverness and their position in life, what they've accomplished, their wealth and et cetera, et cetera. And the moment this pride came into him, the Lord says, verse 17, I cast you down to the ground. And he became the devil.

How long does it take for a perfect angel to become a devil? One moment, less than one second. The moment he got fucked up in his mind, he didn't say anything, he didn't come out of his mouth. And God looked into his heart and said, this guy is proud of his good looks, not realizing that I gave him those good looks.

Proud of his cleverness, not recognizing that I gave him that cleverness. And proud of his position, not recognizing that I put him in that position. Immediately he sinned.

And then what happened? Then what happened is what we read here in Genesis 1. Like an Adam, the earth became cursed. The earth became shapeless, dark, Genesis 1, verse 2, and empty. That is the result of sin.

But God didn't leave the earth like that. The Holy Spirit began to move, it says in Genesis 1, 2. And the word of God went forth, Genesis 1, 3. Let there be light. And the whole of Genesis chapter one teaches us how the Holy Spirit and the word of God worked together to take that rotten earth, spoiled by the devil, and made it a perfect earth, so perfect that at the end of the chapter it says, Almighty God looked at it and he can look more carefully than man and said it's very good.

Yep, the last verse says that. Now that is a parable. Genesis chapter one, we can say, is a description of the message of the entire Bible.

And that is, read it like this. Apply it to man, Genesis 1, verse 1. In the beginning, God created man. Perfect.

But the devil came in, made him proud. How do we say Adam and Eve became proud? Well, it's only pride that makes a person go and eat something which God said, if you eat it, you'll die. And they think they know more than God.

The devil says, no, you won't die. Yeah, I don't think I'll die. That's pride.

Whenever a person listens to the devil, he's proud. God has said you'll die. No, the moment they ate, they died spiritually.

And verse two became true in their spiritual life. Think of Genesis 1 as a picture of man, made perfect. The devil came and man becomes formless, shapeless, dark.

Verse two. But God doesn't leave him like that. God has sent the Holy Spirit now to you and me.

You and I were formless, shapeless, and dark in our non-converted days. And the Holy Spirit has come to change us into his likeness and says, let there be light. And the light of the gospel comes into our hearts.

And what's the next thing? This is the thing I wanted to share with you. What is the very next thing? Once light comes into the heart. Verse four.

God separated the light from the darkness. What is the message there? You know, everything in the Old Testament is interpreted in the New Testament. Once you return to 2 Corinthians in chapter four and you get an explanation of that here.

2 Corinthians four, you read, is referring to this Genesis 1 passage. 2 Corinthians chapter four and verse six. God, who said in Genesis 1, let the light shine out of darkness, is the one who is now shone in our hearts.

You know, in Genesis 1, God said, let there be light and there was light. And he says, that's what God has done in our heart. And here, the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ has come into our heart.

That's what's written in Genesis 1. And then what is the next thing God did after that? What did I say? He separated the light from the darkness. So you turn to chapter six and you read the next thing in verse 14. 2 Corinthians 6, 14, be separated from unbelievers because, verse 14, 2 Corinthians 6, 14, what fellowship does light have with darkness? See, this is the interpretation of what we read in Genesis 1. The New Testament interprets the Old Testament.

Therefore, verse 17, come out from among them, be separate and don't touch what is unclean. And I will welcome you and I'll be a father unto you. So what should we do? Therefore, brethren, verse chapter seven, verse one, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit and perfect holiness in the fear of God.

And then what will happen? What happened at the end of Genesis 1? Man made in the image of God. And the same thing will happen to you. You'll be made once again in the perfect likeness of Christ.

That's our hope. So Genesis 1 is a chapter that describes the message of the whole Bible. God made us perfect.

The devil came in, spoiled everything. Everything became dark, empty, but the Holy Spirit began to move. The word of God went forth.

You know, every day it says, God said, God said, God said. Have you noticed that in Genesis 1? Every day, God said something and something happened. What is the meaning of that? Every day, we need to hear God speaking to us.

That's how we are transformed. And at the end of it, we read on the sixth day, man was made in the likeness of God. If you keep listening to God every day, like it says in Genesis 1, you'll become more and more in the likeness of God.

My passion has been this. Ever since I read what Jesus said, man shall not live by food alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. My prayer has been, Lord, let me not value physical food for my body more than spiritual food, your word for my heart.

Like some people have a motto, no Bible, no breakfast. No Bible, no food. Make a rule for yourself one day.

No Bible, no food today. Your life will be changed, I believe you. Believe me.

What do we read in Genesis 1? Every day, take some time to read Genesis 1 slowly. Not right now, but when you're at home. Every day, we read God said.

Second day, God said. Third day, God said. Fourth day, God said.

Fifth day, sixth day, God said. And finally, man is made in the image of God. The same thing God wants to do with you.

Every day, God says something, God says something, something, and finally you become in the likeness of Christ. And right in chapter one, verse two, it says the Holy Spirit moved upon the earth. And that's the other thing, the Holy Spirit wants to move in your heart.

There's the combination of the Holy Spirit plus the word of God that changes you once again into the image of Christ. And if a church pursues this, it will never decline like the church in Ephesus, like I told you. Or it will never drift away from God like the people who drifted after the days of Joshua.

Why do churches through the ages decline after a few years? Because people become slack. Look at, I mean, I'm not here to judge you, but you examine yourself and ask yourself and answer a question honestly yourself. Look back to the time when you first accepted Christ.

You never missed a day without reading the Bible then. But now, aha, you say, well, I'm not a new believer. I'm a believer of some standing, people in the church respect me.

I can afford to skip reading the scriptures. No wonder you lose your temper so often. No wonder you lust with your eyes so often.

No wonder you grumble and complain. No wonder you make life difficult for your husband or your wife. No wonder your children go astray from God.

Wasn't like that in the beginning. You wanted to hear God. Dear brothers, don't get discouraged.

We cannot do anything about the past, but we can do a lot about tomorrow. Say, Lord, it's not gonna be like this anymore. I want the Holy Spirit to be upon me like Genesis 1 verse 2, the Holy Spirit is upon me.

And I want the word of God to come to me every day, even if it's only five minutes. Say, Lord, I wanna hear you. I do that as soon as I get up in the morning.

Before I get out of bed, I lay in bed awake. I lie in bed every day. I lie in bed awake for a little while, even if it's just five minutes.

I wanna calm my spirit and I wanna say, Lord, I wanna hear you today. I'm not reading the Bible, it's all dark. And I wanna hear it, then I get up.

Then I read the scriptures. If you don't have time to read the scriptures in the morning, read it some other time during the day. Carry it with you, carry a pocket New Testament with you if you go to work.

Pull it out sometime and read it. Or have it on your phone and listen to it sometimes. But don't miss this and remain in humility and when the devil tries to condemn you, confess to the devil, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me from all sin.

Be bold to say that. And if you do that, I believe you contribute to preserving your church in life and light. Because like I said yesterday, if you have the aroma of Christ in you, you can influence the church just by sitting there, even without opening your mouth.

If a very heavily perfumed lady came and sat in your congregation, I tell you, everybody around will get the aroma. You don't have to open your mouth. There's something about that perfume which is so powerful.

The aroma people get is, hey, what's this? And the aroma of Christ is something like that. They should never, a person who's a true Christian, even if you've never had a chance to witness for Christ in your office, they will know that you are different and they'll never forget it, never. I remember a Naval officer whom I met about 40 years after I first met him when I was a young Naval officer and he was my senior, now he was an Admiral and he met me in Bangalore and he had retired and he was so surprised to see me 40 years later.

And you know what he said to me? He says, Zach, I can never forget you. They knew I was a Christian. I didn't go around to the border by saying I'm a Christian.

No, it's just the way I conducted myself. People would invite me to the movies and say, I'm sorry, I don't go to the movies. They'd ask me to have a drink and I'd say, I'm sorry, I don't drink.

And I didn't have to preach to them. They gave me the opportunity to witness. I remembered those Naval functions.

Everybody would be standing around with a glass of whiskey and I would stand with a glass of orange juice. I didn't preach because I didn't want to offend people. But somebody would come up to me and say, why are you drinking orange juice? Ah, you asked for it, right? Now I'm gonna tell you.

And I gave them the gospel. He initiated it, not me. You can't say I started preaching to him.

He asked me why I'm drinking orange juice and I tried to tell him. And it crashed into my heart by the same. I remember once some officer who was my senior was upset with my standing up saying that I would not be in charge of ordering whiskey in for the ship, for the officers.

And he was so upset with me because he was a non-Christian and he said, I'm gonna march with him before the commanding officers for disobeying me. I said, sir, whatever you may say, it's against my conviction to drink alcohol or to order alcohol for others. So he marched me in, which is quite a serious thing, before the commanding officer.

The commanding officer was a Roman Catholic. And this man complained about me, sir, this man, this lieutenant is not taking my orders to order whiskey. So the captain asked me, why can't you do it? I said, sir, I'm a Christian and I cannot order whiskey for people.

And he laughed because he was a Roman Catholic. And he said, I'm also a Christian. He opened the door for me to witness.

I said, sir, I also thought I was a Christian because I was born in a Christian family. And I realized that I needed to receive Christ into my life, which I did when I was 19. That's when I became a Christian.

What an opportunity to witness. And he gave me, he opened the door. He can't say that I tried to preach to him.

He opened the door and said, why? And I said, yeah, I'll explain to you. You know, if you're always alert to be a witness for Christ, God will open some door. And like I said, 40 years from now, they'll remember.

They'll remember you. I remember another senior officer of mine, my colony officer, when he was on his deathbed in the Naval Hospital, somebody went to meet him. And that chap told me later on, he said, Zach, he was remembering you.

You know, when people get near their deathbed, they remember eternity. They think of eternity, and then they remember the one person who thought that, told them about eternity. That was me.

So dear brothers and sisters, be a witness for Christ in your place of work and in your church. Be upright. I started when I was 19 and a half.

Most of you guys are all much older than that. Be faithful, be honest, and I tell you, when you come to the end of your life, you'll be able to look back over your life with a life lived in a worthwhile way, more than somebody who's just accomplished some great thing in the world or a great football player or athlete or anything, something far greater than all that, or became a billionaire. That you lived a life, a worthwhile life, to give back to God the life he gave you, and that you were a useful member of the church which you're a part of, and preserving it from decline.

The great job you need, every one of you, is to make sure you do your part to preserve your local church from declining. And that you can do by keeping your conscience clean and listening to God, confessing to telling the devil that he was defeated on the cross, and walking in humility. Yeah, let's bow our heads in prayer.

Please think about anything God has spoken to you particularly, and say, Lord, help me in that area, not to forget what you have told me today. Thank you, Father, for helping us today. Bless every brother and every family here.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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