

We Can Overcome Satan

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of honesty, integrity, and growing in the likeness of Christ to overcome Satan and achieve spiritual growth.

Duration: 1:04:25

Scripture: Malachi 2:16, Matthew 5:27-32, Romans 13:6, Ephesians 4:3, 1 Timothy 2:9, 1 Timothy 3:2, James 4:7, 1 John 4:4

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Living"

Description

This sermon addresses the importance of maintaining high spiritual standards without falling into legalism. It emphasizes the need to hate sin, repent sincerely, and strive for Christ-likeness in all aspects of life. The sermon also discusses the church's stance on divorce and remarriage, highlighting the biblical standards and the need for forgiveness and restoration in affected families.

Transcript

So that's a little glimpse of just one of the many conferences we have. It's just one language. We have conferences, as I said, in five Indian languages.

And our main conference is in Bangalore once a year. It's been a great joy for us to see how the Lord has brought very simple people. You probably saw everybody sits on the floor during the meeting.

And everybody sits on the floor and they eat in place of serving. That's the way they do it in their homes. Their homes are small and they don't have tables and chairs in their homes.

They sit on the floor and sleep on the floor. So in the conferences also they sleep on the floor and sit on the floor. Sisters separately and brothers separately.

That's how it is. You know, the Bible says that God has chosen the poor of the world rich in faith. That's in James chapter 2. That's a verse that I have seen actually in these.

Most of our work is in the poor villages. And I've really seen the truth of that verse. James 2 and 5. Listen, my beloved brethren.

This is inspired scripture. Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith? We have found that there are some tremendous advantages in living in an insecure, poor country. A lot of people think that, a

lot of people migrate to Australia because there's a lot more security here financially.

But I don't know whether you folks have more faith than these poor people there who have no social security and no financial security but who are happy in the Lord. And I've seen a lot more people there happier in the Lord, much happier marriages than people have in western countries. We have never had in 40 years one single case of divorce in our churches till today.

And we have thousands of believers. God has chosen the poor of the world rich in faith. They don't have the luxury of wasting money on unnecessary things.

All the people you saw have never had a vacation in their whole life. Can't afford it. My wife and I too in the cities, in our church in Bangalore, we had one vacation in our entire life.

Most of the people probably have none. Some have one or two. Folks are getting a little richer in India.

For many years it's been very difficult. But I don't know if Jesus ever had a vacation. I don't think so.

He was working as a carpenter and then he was preaching. There are so many things in the western world people think are essential to the point where children will complain they can't have some. They need so many types of spreads on the table.

It's blessed to live in a situation where you don't have a choice, you just eat what's given. We have much more contented children in the villages. They realize that their parents can't afford much.

And more hardworking, more respectful to older people. Many of the real values in life which many rich people don't have, values that true Christians should have, but which are easy for every one of us to have if we want them. But like Jesus said, it's very difficult for a rich person to enter into God's kingdom.

Not because he's rich. Because riches tend to make a man proud and look down on others. Just like intelligence tends to make a man proud and look down on others who are stupid.

That's why Jesus also said, I thank you Father, Matthew 11, 25, that you have hidden these wonderful truths from the intelligent and the clever. You saw one or two brothers speaking there besides me. The one who's standing next to me is a translator and he's a very good speaker by himself.

Right now he and another brother whose picture you saw there speaking, those two brothers are having a conference in the Mumbai church this weekend. Many conferences now are, I never go there. Through the years God has raised up other brothers who run the whole conference, speak at all the conferences.

I go to as many as possible. But the youth camps now are being run entirely by other brothers. God has through the years raised up other brothers with a tremendous anointing.

And that's been my greatest joy to see another generation coming up who can proclaim the word of God. I mean, they don't speak English by the way. That brother who spoke, whom you saw speaking besides me there at the pulpit, he doesn't speak English at all.

I mean, he can speak conversely. He never speaks in English because, first of all, they don't read the English Bible. They read the Tamil Bible and speaks.

But I'll tell you this. I've hardly ever heard people speak with such an anointing. He can't speak for one hour and it's gripping the whole one hour.

Challenged, unchallenged person by it. And there are people who brought up their children in godly ways. So it's a great encouragement for me to see what God has done in all these places.

Because we have stuck to the principles of God's word, believing that what God did in the first century, as the Apostle Paul went around planting churches, appointing elders, sending letters of correction, etc., God can do it today. That's what we wanted to prove. And that if anyone, even in a poor country, no social security, nothing, no government support for anything, if they sought God's kingdom first, His righteousness, all the other things would be added.

And you know, many of these folks have come with tremendous superstition. I'll give you one example. There was a brother who earned his living by selling milk.

He had a cow and he would milk the cow and go around selling milk. And like every milkman in India, he would add water to the milk, or sometimes milk to the water. And that's the only way he could survive.

And everybody else is selling diluted, adulterated milk, diluted milk. How could he survive? So he did that. And then, one day he got converted.

He was a non-Christian and he got converted. And he suddenly realized, hey, I can't cheat people anymore. I can't sell somebody else's milk because it's not pure milk.

So he decided that he would sell pure milk, even if he earned less. But you know, one thing we have found, that God honors those who honor Him. Imagine a man like that competing with other people who are crooks, earning his living.

He may not earn as much as others, but he can be honest, he can teach his children honesty, and bring up his children in a good way. There are others like that, who have done little businesses from the beginning, done it honestly. Suzie's father, for example, he started his coffinry business.

He started a coffinry business in Bangalore. Such a big city with already so many people. Very, very difficult.

With all the competition. But because he was honest, God blessed his business tremendously. Many of our brothers have experienced this.

Honesty. And the result is, God honors them. And in a fierce, competitive world, they earn their living.

They don't become millionaires, but they earn their living, they're able to take care of their children, and you pay for them, etc. It's a great joy for many of us who have found that type of faithfulness of God in our personal life. Our children experience this.

They can never forget all their life. It's a great inheritance to give to our children. God honors those who honor Him.

So, there was this guy, he decided that he was going to not only give pure milk, according to his old heathen concept, he said, I have to make some sacrifice to atone for my sins. You know, this whole concept of somebody atoning for my sins is absolutely unheard of in heathen Christianity, in heathen

religions. In heathen religions, you pay for your own sin.

And that shows that you really repented of it. So, he decided, after becoming Christian, he vowed before God he would kill his cow as an act of repentance for all the years in which he cheated others to atone for his sin. But then, after he had taken that vow, he suddenly realized that he no way to survive because he had only one cow.

So, he was very disturbed. And he came, fortunately there was a conference soon after that at this very town where he saw it, and he came up to me and said, in the local language, he doesn't know any English, I can speak three Indian languages, so I could speak to him. So, he told me, what shall I do? And I made this vow to God and now I have to keep it.

I said, God is a loving father. That concept is just not there in the non-Christian religions. God is a loving father.

And he knows that his little children sometimes say a few stupid things. So, don't worry about it. You know, sometimes the little child is angry with dad and mom saying, I'm going to leave the house.

I'm not going to stay in this house anymore at three years old. What does the father say to him? OK, you said you're going to leave the house, now leave the house. He knows that it's stupid.

So, I told this brother, don't worry, God loves you. Jesus is already atoned for all your sins. You don't have to pay a single penny or make any type of sacrifice for your sins.

And God also knows that sometimes His children make foolish vows like you made. He's not going to take it seriously. Not at all.

He's not going to hold you to that like, you know, like I used the example of the child said, I'm going to bring the house to home. You said you'll leave the house, now leave it. You said you'll kill your cow.

No. Boy, that was a revelation to him that he could now have a loving father in heaven who would even bear with some of the stupid foolish things he said. And that's something all of us can understand too.

But sometimes we say a few stupid foolish things, but God as well. And God understands us. He's a merciful, loving father.

So, it's a wonderful thing to lead folks like this into the life of a loving father they've never known in their life. Many of them have come from heat and darkness and never known even the love of an earthly father. And what a wonderful thing to know God as their loving father.

I consider it one of the greatest privileges God's given me to be able to mingle with these people. You know, when you mingle always with high level, educated intellectual people who can speak at your level, it's very easy to become a very sophisticated Christian. And in Bangalore we have PHDs and very highly qualified computer engineers and MBAs and all in our church.

But when I go down to these villages where most of our churches are, for many years I used to just sit on the floor with them. Now, of course, because I don't have a back problem they've given me a chair. But otherwise for years and years I just sit on the floor with them and sit and talk to them and sit there on the floor and eat with them and sleep on the floor there.

That's how it was and that's how we built these churches in those early years. It's a tremendous joy very often we'd sit up past midnight sitting around talking God's Word. And the hunger there is in these folks.

They've faced tragedies and calamities. Some of their husbands have died and their wives have borne it wonderfully and brought up their children single-handedly. Of course the church has supported them.

So it's not that they've escaped the tragedies that are common to the human race. They have. But they've borne it and it's been a tremendous testament.

And again in all these churches they've never asked for money. The elders are working people who support themselves. They're not paid.

We don't have a single paid pastor in any of our churches. We don't even call anybody a pastor. We have only elders all self-supporting and working people and who take the opportunity to preach God's Word from their experience.

They're not so interested in presenting beautiful sermons but sharing the Word that would be a practical help. And because they live at their level and live in their village they know the type of problems they have there. So it's been a tremendous blessing to me to fellowship with them and see how God is the same for the rich and the poor for the educated and the uneducated.

It's a wonderful thing to be a part of the Body of Christ. That's the main thing that God is building all over the world today. The Body of Jesus Christ.

And the whole purpose is that the Body may grow up into the likeness of Christ. That's the reason why we have these conferences and meetings so that we can grow up into the fullness of Christ. So turn with me to Ephesians in chapter 4. Here we read about the Body.

Paul spoke a lot about the Body of Christ. And he tells them in verse 3 to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4 verse 3. Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

And he goes on to say in verse 13. Until we attain to the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man and the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ as a result we must no longer be children tossed here and there. But verse 15, speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects unto Him who is the head here in Christ.

These are inspired words of Scripture. What it basically means is that it's not enough to have just accepted Christ and found our sins forgiven. That's just the beginning.

It's the birth process. Jesus said about being born again. That's when we receive Christ as our Savior and the guilt of our past life is removed through His death on the cross.

And He gives us His life within us by coming to live in us. But that's only the beginning. It's like a baby being born.

And here it speaks about growing up in all aspects. Verse 15, that means this baby is like a baby that's born into our homes has to grow up. Think what would have happened if your mothers soon after you were born just didn't bother about you and threw you out into the street to fend for yourself.

Your parents nurtured you and took care of you for so many years. And those of you who are mothers and fathers, take care of your little babies. They need such a lot of nurture, encouragement and help.

They grow up to become men. And here it says about all of us, once we are born again, we should be growing up into the likeness of Christ. So which means, just like we see our children grow, there's a great delight when parents see my child's become taller.

My child can speak a few words now. And now my child can say a few sentences. And now my child can write the alphabets.

You know, they're growing all the time. And my child can add and subtract now. I mean, we have, my wife and I have 12 grandchildren now.

It's wonderful to see how they grow. It's like living our children's childhood all over again. To see how they grow and to see each of them learn to speak a few words and learning alphabets, learning, they're growing.

And what a delight it is to see them grow. Let there be concern in the heart of a parent the child is not growing. If after a number of years it can't walk or it can't speak properly or it's not able to breathe even at 7 or 8 years old, don't.

Father is concerned. Mother is concerned. We want our children to grow and get a good education.

It's exactly like that, the way God looks at His children. And just like a father and mother would be disappointed if there's a stagnation in a child's growth. That means it came out to a certain level and that's it, it didn't grow anymore.

This is the type of frustration that God faces when He looks at a lot of His children who have stopped growing spiritually. You see, I've accepted Christ on my way to heaven. They're not growing.

Or they came to a certain level of growth and they got stuck. We want our children to be growing every single year. They should not be in the same place this year as they were last year.

Whether physically, mentally, in any way. There must be a growth in them all the time. And that is God's will for every single one of us.

And how shall we evaluate our growth? In school it's very easy to evaluate growth by seeing how they do in the different subjects. But for us as Christians, if you turn to Romans chapter 8, we read in Romans in chapter 8 the ultimate destination that God has planned for us. Romans 8 and verse 28, no sorry 29.

Romans 8 29. Whom God foreknew He predestined. It's a very interesting word.

Predestined. It means God has made a destination for us in advance. It's just like if you travel in a take an airplane flight you get a ticket in which your destination is already predestined.

Maybe Melbourne or Sydney or Perth. Starting point Brisbane destination, wherever it is. That's predestination.

It's already there on your ticket. And so, God has also given us a destination that's predestined. And that is, what's the goal? For all of us it's the same.

To become like His Son Jesus Christ. Think of that. A lot of people think our destination is heaven.

It's not heaven. It's becoming like Jesus Christ. It's a far more glorious destination than heaven.

Heaven is just a physical place. How terrible it would be if we go to heaven and still we behave selfishly and grumble and complain and backbite and get angry and do all the stupid things we do here on earth. Heaven would be a terrible place.

I want to get out of there as soon as possible. But heaven is not going to be like that. Because our goal is not heaven.

God's destination for us is not heaven. And you probably won't hear that anywhere else except here. The truth.

Our destination, it says here, in verse 29, is to become like Jesus Christ so that in heaven He will be the eldest among many young brothers. You know, that's why we call each other brother and sister. That's why we don't give anybody titles like pastor or reverend or any such thing.

Because the highest title you can ever give me is brother of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine a higher title than that if I call you sister of Jesus Christ? Can you imagine a higher title than that? That is the value of that title brother-sister. Maybe some of you never knew it till now.

That's the meaning when you call a person a brother or a sister. That you're calling it, you're a younger brother of Jesus Christ. I respect you as that.

You're a younger sister of Jesus Christ. I respect you as that. That's how we should be towards each other.

That Jesus Christ might be the eldest among many brothers and sisters. That's why God is our father and Jesus Christ is our elder brother. And it is into His likeness that God is destined that we should grow.

That is our education. Just like in school you have an education from kindergarten first grade, second grade, all the way to twelfth and then to college and post-graduate. In the Christian life it is from being born again is like entering school and then year by year by year by year we should be moving towards our destination or to use the illustration of a flight.

How do you know you've gotten to the right plane? You know most of these planes now have a screen where they show you the flight path and show you where the plane is and you can know immediately whether you're on the right plane going to the right destination because it's moving closer and closer and closer to your destination. And I believe that's how we know that we are moving in the right direction as well. That every year we find ourselves becoming a little more Christ-like.

Not a little more having Bible knowledge. Bible knowledge and Christ-likeness are two different things. Bible knowledge you know next to God who has the maximum Bible knowledge in the world? It's the devil.

He knows the Bible so well that he could even quote a verse to Jesus in the temptation. So don't ever think that growth in Bible knowledge is making you spiritual. Maybe making you more like the devil.

But growth in character in humility and love and goodness and holiness and purity that is growth into the likeness of Christ. So we must evaluate ourselves and ask ourselves am I a disappointment to my

Heavenly Father? Just like a child who is failing in one class has to sit in the same class next year. Would be a disappointment to his earthly parents.

We need to ask ourselves whether we are a disappointment to our Heavenly Father by stagnating at some point in our Christian life. That means my behavior towards my wife is pretty much the same as it was last year. No improvement.

I'm not saying we'd be perfect. We don't in one year we will not be perfect even at the end of our life. But the Bible speaks about pressing on to perfection.

And that is the whole purpose of temptation. You know once I was talking to my little 7 year old grandson. He was lying down in bed about to sleep and he said, Grandpa can I ask you some questions about the Bible? Oh boy, that's exciting.

A 7 year old grandson wants to ask me a question about the Bible. I said, sure, you can ask me. And he said, Grandpa why does God allow Satan to exist? I said, wow, what a powerful question for a 7 year old to ask.

Why does God allow Satan to exist? Why didn't he get rid of him? He's such a nuisance. I said, I'll tell you why. Because, I said, I'll use an example.

Supposing you wrestle with a strong man. Your own muscles will develop, right? That wrestling process makes you stronger. And if you keep wrestling with that person, a very strong person, your muscles get stronger and stronger every year.

So, that's one reason, not the only one, that's one reason why God has allowed Satan to exist so that he can tempt you. And, you know, at his age, tempt you to disobey Mommy and Daddy or do something wrong. He resisted.

He said, no, I'm going to obey Mommy and Daddy. And he became strong. He was so excited to hear that.

He said, thank you, Grandpa, I'm going to resist Satan. And I was so thankful to hear that. I hope he does it all his life.

He was named after me, so he's another exact woman of the ages. I... But all of us, you know, there's a question sometimes even a grown-up adult does not know why they're saved. They don't even think about it.

Why not allow Satan to exist? How do you crush him and get rid of him? God allows us to be tempted so that we become stronger and get a promotion to the next class. So that the next year we're not at the same level. We are combined resisting.

If you yield to him, you know, the devil would love it if you just yield to him and then you fail. When you fail, you just remain at the same level. So if you are, you know, just as rude and just as unkind and just as angry and bitter and unforgiving and gossipy type of person this year as you were last year, then that proves the whole year you just failed in your struggle with the devil.

He overcame you every single time. And you're at the same level. And God wants you to progress into Christ's likeness little by little by little every year.

You don't get your PhD in one year. But if a little five-year-old tells me... If I ask a little five- or six-year-old you join school here at six, okay? If I ask a six-year-old, what are you studying? And he says, Uncle, I'm studying for my PhD. Wow! Fourth class even now.

I'm just in first grade and I'm working towards my PhD. I'm proud of such a child. That guy's got ambition.

And if a Christian says, I'm working towards becoming like Jesus Christ 100%. Wow! Where are you? I'm just in first grade and I'm still trying to overcome my anger. I'm still struggling to forgive somebody.

Great! Never mind. You're beginning. You're working towards that goal.

You can get there. That's why God's given us the Holy Spirit. I can't do it without Him.

It's not that God just left us alone to fight the devil. We've been locked up. The very first second is too strong for us.

That's why, you know, in the Old Testament, you never hear of a single person fighting Satan. Satan is almost there behind the scenes. But apart from the Book of Job, he's almost non-existent in the Old Testament.

And even in the Book of Job, he doesn't appear on earth except in the heavens. But in the New Testament, he's present everywhere. All the time Jesus was dealing with demons and the devil and finally he was defeated on the cross and you read about fighting Satan in the Epistles and all that.

He's a very present enemy in the New Testament. And why didn't God allow Satan to have a free course like that in the Old Testament? Because nobody had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. They'd all be knocked out by him in a second.

So God restrained him. But why has He let him loose now to tempt us and try to knock us down because now He's given us the Holy Spirit. There's a great verse in 1 John chapter 4. 1 John chapter 4, it says verse 4, the last part, 1 John 4. The last part, greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world.

The one who's living in me, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ is more powerful than this devil who is in the world. So when He comes to fight against me, the Holy Spirit gives me the strength to fight against Him. But He won't move me automatically because I'm not a robot.

If God had made us like robots, we would all be very... we wouldn't be spiritual, we'd be just machines. You know, for God to make us spiritual, He had to give us two things. One, He had to give us free will that He never takes away.

You can be born again and you can tell a lie. You can be filled with the Spirit and still go and come into adultery. You're free.

God, if He takes away your free will, at any point in your life, you become a robot. God doesn't want robots in Heaven anymore. You don't want a little robot as a child.

You want a real living child. God is Father. He doesn't want robots.

That's why He never takes away our free will. He gives us freedom to choose whether you want to resist the devil or yield to the devil. It's only by your choice that you can become holy.

If you don't make a choice, you cannot be holy. And the second thing God has to give us is a conscience. Animals don't have a conscience.

So once He's given us free will and a conscience that tells us what's wrong, what's right, then we can become holy. Because then we've made a choice. Our conscience tells us this is right, that's wrong.

And God sees which you're going to choose. So if you seek for the power of the Holy Spirit at that time when you're tempted, and Lord, please give me grace now to overcome. He'll give you grace to overcome.

When you sit in front of that computer and you're tempted to go to a pornographic site, which will do you no good, it may give you five minutes of pleasure and a lifetime of misery in your mind. A lifetime of dirty dreams for five minutes of pleasure. That's like Esau.

Esau was so eager to get that bowl of porridge for five minutes of satisfaction to lose a lifetime of a birthright that was his. And the New Testament warns us, don't be like Esau who for the sake of a few moments of pleasure, not like people who take drugs or drink a lot, a few moments of pleasure and a lifetime of misery. God, the devil never tells us of that lifetime of misery that will follow.

He keeps that hidden. We all know that all the misery and all the trouble in the world came because Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. But the devil never told Eve what's going to happen.

He just said, you're going to enjoy this. Don't you see your mouth watering when you see this lovely fruit hanging from there? And Eve says, what God's told us not to eat. Oh, don't worry.

The first lie that God told the first lie that Satan told Eve was sin is not serious. God won't mind if you eat it. You will not die.

That's the first lie in the Bible. Even if you disobey God, you will not die. And he's been saying that to man for 6,000 years.

Even if you sin, it's not serious. Nothing serious will happen. You'll be all right.

God's a loving Father. He won't ignore you. He won't forget you.

But they discover that they got thrown out of Eden that very same day. God keeps His word. But if Satan had told her the truth, the full truth, yes, it's true.

It's very tasty. That's right. There is a pleasure you'll get out of it by disobeying God in this area, eating of this fruit, and you can apply that to every sinful pleasure there is.

Yes, I don't deny, you will get a pleasure from it and you'll really enjoy it for a little while. But, Eve, I also want to tell you, imagine Satan saying like this, your first child will become a murderer. Will kill your second child.

And then, you're going to have a really tough time when you get thrown out of God in Eden. You'll struggle to live. The earth will not yield its fruit easily to you.

And your children will grow up to be murderers and adulterers. They'll be sickness. All types of terrible sicknesses.

People will die of sickness and all these things will happen. And as your children multiply, they'll fight with each other and there'll be wars and killing and misery and unhappiness. Now eat the fruit.

Jesus said, no thanks. But do you think the devil would tell all that? No. Do you think he tells you all the consequences of the sin you're committing today? No.

He'll only tell you the pleasure you're going to get right now. My dear brothers and sisters, don't let the devil make a fool of you. Like he made a fool of a teacher.

She didn't have a Bible. She didn't have the Holy Spirit. She didn't have Jesus Christ as an example.

She at least had some excuse. We have no excuse. These things are written for our instruction and warning.

Remember, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. The devil is not more powerful than the Holy Spirit that lives in me. If you want to compare it, it's like by myself I wouldn't be able to tackle the devil.

You know, if an Alsatian, a German shepherd, a fierce German shepherd dog, watchdog type of person came barking at me, I'd be scared. Because I know this dangerous or one of these pit bull type of dogs that fight everyone and tear them to pieces. I'd be scared.

But if I had an African lion here as my friend coming along with me for my walk, ten of these dogs come, I'd say, hey, why don't you just give a roar around me? Don't touch them. Just give them a roar and they all go run away with their tails between their legs. This is how it is to have Jesus with us.

Remember, it's an absolutely correct picture. If He's not there, I'm scared. He'll tear me to pieces.

But when He is with us, one roar, and they flee. Do you know the Bible says resist the devil, James 4, 7, and he will flee from you. I was teaching mathematics to the brothers and sisters here this morning.

Mathematical things in the Bible. Okay, here's another mathematical question. At what speed does the devil flee from us? It's in the Bible.

Believe me, read carefully. Like I told you the difference between tongues and prophecy. How much better one is than the other and many other mathematical things.

At what speed does the devil flee from us? I'll tell you. At 300,000 kilometers per second. That's the speed at which the devil runs from us and the answer is in Luke chapter 10.

Verse 18, Jesus said, there's a paraphrase. I was watching Satan fall at 300,000 kilometers per second from heaven. Tell me if it's a correct paraphrase or not.

I saw Satan. You're a PC student, right? Am I right? Yes. I was... I saw Satan falling at 300,000 kilometers per second from heaven.

That's the speed at which he runs and I resist him in Jesus' name. The greater is he that's in you. He doesn't walk away.

That's what it says in James chapter 7. I thank God for that, not only because of Scripture, but I've actually proven it in my life. When I say to Satan, in Jesus' name, I resist you. When you feel oppressed, when you

feel the pressure to be patient, remember, the one living in you is greater than the one in the world who resisted you.

In Jesus' name. Okay? There are more questions there. Well, I was given a few questions to answer, so I'll start with these.

We had promised to just take a few minutes to answer these questions. Okay, Brother Zach, how do you evaluate your personal spiritual growth in your Christian life? Oh, I'd answer that without even knowing. By becoming more Christ-like every year.

That's how we evaluate our Christian life. For that, God has to show me some area in my life where I'm un-Christ-like. Continuously.

I should have discovered some areas in my life where I behaved selfishly, or in pride, or in an unloving way in the last one year, which I never knew before. It's just like you tell your children, did you study something in mathematics this year which you didn't know last year? Or is it the same stuff? No one learned the same stuff this year as they did last year. They already learned addition and subtraction last year.

Now we've got to go on to multiplication. In the same way, we evaluate by discovering some area in our life where we didn't know our un-Christ-like virtues. The mark of God's blessing is that He shows you areas in your life where you're un-Christ-like, and you admit it, you confess it, and ask for the power of the Spirit to overcome it.

Okay, the next question is, what does it mean to have a gentle and a quiet spirit? You know, the Bible says that it's, let me quote that verse, it's in 1 Peter chapter 3, where it says that, 1 Peter 3, it's speaking particularly to women, saying, don't let your adornment be external, but inward. In other words, God's not looking at your outward beauty and adornment, but the inward adornment of your life should be a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. I think it means a spirit that is not ready for a fight, that will not get into a fight that's self-controlled.

And if somebody comes up for an argument or a fight, we don't get involved in that. Quiet means a picture of rest in our spirit that is not ready. You know, some people's spirits agitate very quickly.

Some little thing happens and they get all agitated and worked up. Somebody said something hurt, somebody said something about them, something bad. They're so agitated, they can't even toss around in bed at night and say, wait till I see that person.

That's not a Christian. The devil's overcoming. So, a quiet spirit means I need that in God's hands.

God's going to make that work for my good. You know, when we stand up for the Lord, people will oppose us. In India, in my own church, for many years now, I've stood for the truth of God's word.

And that has brought opposition from some other Christians. You know, and I speak so much against collecting money, you know, some pastors don't like it. They won't say, that's the reason.

They'll warn people against me as though I'm preaching some false doctrine. There was this one brother who was transferred to Bangalore and somebody told him, when you go to Bangalore, you can go to any church, but don't go to Zaccarone's church. That's one church which is not going anywhere.

So he was, you know, amused or surprised. Why is he warning against this particular church? So let me go and just check it out. What is so evil about this church? And he said, I'm quite strong.

He checked it out. He was gripped by the truth and never left. So, what did that man succeed by speaking evil against me? He added a good member to our church.

So, remember, we believe that God is mighty, almighty. He can turn even the evil that other people do for good. So, quietness in our heart and a non-agitated.

We should not be agitated. I look at it like this for myself. If I'm agitated, upset about something somebody said about me or did to me, I'm at that moment saying that devil is in charge of this universe.

That devil's got all authority on this earth. I say, no. My savior's got all authority on this earth.

Jesus said, I've got all authority in heaven and earth and my father runs this universe. And he's promised in Romans 8, 28 that he'll make everything work for my good. And if that thing is going to work for my good, why should I get agitated? I won't get agitated.

When you get agitated, you're expressing your total unbelief in the fact that God can make everything work for your good. You're saying he can make everything work for my good, but in this particular case, the devil's a bit stronger. He's not.

So let's be dressed. Okay, another question is, there have been times in my life when I sincerely believed that I've repented of something, but later on I found it was only a confession. That means I confessed it, but I did not turn around.

And I'm just sometimes falling back as I don't get victory straight away Am I deceiving myself? Or do I believe I've really repented? See, repentance only means I've turned around from sin. I hate it. So instead of asking yourself whether you got victory over some sin, that may take some time to overcome.

Some sins are more deeply rooted than others. I think sins like anger and sexual lust and all take a little time to overcome. You don't get victory overnight.

But the first thing you need to ask yourself is do you hate it? See, if you don't hate something, you're not going to overcome it ever. If you sort of tolerate it, if you've got a cobra, a wild cobra that came into your house from the garden, and you say, that looks pretty nice, that creature, and let it be around here and feed it a little milk now and then, you're going to have problems. Because you tolerate it.

You shouldn't tolerate it. You're going to hate it. Try it out.

Even if chasing it around doesn't go out too easy, you're not going to take it lying down. Try it out. It's your attitude to sin.

I don't ask people if you've got victory over sin. I say, I want to ask, do you hate it? Do you hate that? Do you see that as an unchrist-like habit? Whatever it is. Do you see that as a habit that Jesus would not do? And that you yourself would not be doing if Jesus were sitting next to you.

You know, sins that you've been, when you're talking to someone, would you talk that way if Jesus was sitting there? When you're going to look at a computer site, would you look at that computer site if Jesus was sitting next to you? Those are the ways by which we can know whether we are in fellowship with

Jesus. So we drive Jesus out at that moment and say, just leave me alone, I've got to do something private. So, do I hate it? That's the question.

If I hate it, I'm on the right road. Then I confess and say, Lord, I hate it. Now please help me to hate it so much that I'll really get rid of it in my life.

Our hatred for sin must increase. And one way that I can see my hatred increasing is by seeing that it was that particular sin that nailed my Savior on the cross. He was nailed to the cross for that particular sin which I'm indulging in.

And that makes me hate it. Wouldn't you hate somebody who killed somebody you loved very much? I've heard of a man who didn't believe in hell. No, no, God of love won't create a hell.

There can't be a hell. God is a God of love. Till somebody kidnapped his daughter, raped her, and murdered her and threw her body in a ditch.

They never found the man. His father got so angry that he said, if there's no hell, God's got to create one for a fellow like that. Now he became mad because it became personal.

As long as it was not personal, as long as it was somebody else, he could say, God is a God of love and He won't create a hell for anybody. Till it affected his own daughter. Till he lost his daughter to a rapist and a murderer.

So, to hate sin will help us to overcome it. We hate someone who does evil. We must hate sin itself.

Because it does evil to you. It harms you. It dishonors you.

And it's this sin which killed Jesus Christ. The more you meditate on that, the more you will hate sin in your life. And then you say, Lord, I don't want to do it.

And so, that will bring repentance, sorrow and eternal victory. So don't condemn yourself if you haven't got victory. But ask yourself, can I begin by hating it and a little by little victory will come.

Okay, here's a question on legalism. How do you keep from falling into legalism considering we are so inclined to do so? Yeah. Do you know that Jesus had his strongest denunciation for legalists? You know what he called the Pharisees who were the legalists of his day who read the Bible? He was serpents and he was a generation of vipers.

How will you escape the damnation of hell? But I'll tell you another thing. That those who are legalists don't really know that they're legalists. The Pharisees didn't know that.

And, what was the difference between Jesus and the Pharisees? Let's look at it like this. Jesus was spiritual. The Pharisees were religious leaders.

Some people think if somebody has a very high standard he's a legalist. Did the Pharisees have a higher standard than Jesus Christ? Not at all. Jesus had a much higher standard than the Pharisees.

So don't think that if somebody has a high standard of holiness or a high standard of morality that he's a legalist. That is someone who has got a lower standard of morality trying to blame someone with a higher standard of morality and saying he's a legalist. That's to defend yourself.

Then you have to accuse Jesus of being the biggest legalist of all because he had the highest standard of morality. He said if you look at a woman it's adultery. He said if you get angry it's murder.

What a high standard that is. The Pharisees never had that standard. So when you find because I've seen this happen people accuse us of it in our church.

We have certain high standards in our church in many areas like I mentioned in the matter of money. But people can call us legalists for being such a high standard in the area of money. See it's not higher than the standard Jesus had.

If you try to have a standard higher than Jesus then it is legalism. But to have the standard that Jesus had in the area of money is absolute righteousness. Anything lower than that is sin.

That's how we see it. In every area to be righteous in money matters. Is it legalism if we teach that we must pay our taxes properly and not cheat the government? Somebody can say hey that's legalism.

What do you mean? The government is pretty corrupt so I don't feel like paying my taxes. Every government in the world is corrupt. So nobody in the world should be paying taxes.

That's the case. Do you know where it says we must pay our taxes? I'll tell you. Romans 13.

Therefore we pay our taxes. Romans chapter 13 and verse 6. For this reason also you pay taxes because rulers are servants of God devoting themselves to collect your taxes. Do you know who he wrote to Rome? And by the way, do you know who was the ruler of Rome at this time? The Emperor Nero who killed Christians.

The Holy Spirit, I even don't pay taxes to him. Your government is not more corrupt than the Emperor Nero. It's not a question of doing what's righteous.

The government has to run. If somebody is corrupt, God will deal with them. But if I'm supposed to pay my taxes, I pay my taxes.

And I've done it all these years myself and I never regret it. I don't want Jesus, you know sometimes they ask should we give to Caesar money? Caesar is a corrupt guy. And Jesus said, give to Caesar what belongs to him.

You give to God what belongs to God. I don't want to cheat Caesar of the taxes and give it to God. He won't accept it.

So that's another area people can say you guys are very legalistic. We have high standards in women's dresses when they come to church and say not higher than what the Bible says. We never preach anything which is not in the Bible.

It says in 1 Timothy chapter 2 I want the women to be dressed modestly discreetly with proper clothing. This is 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 9. Why does the Holy Spirit mention only women and not men? It's not because he's partial or he's discriminatory. It's because we all know from our surroundings just like that in the first century when this was written that women have a greater tendency to be modest in their dressing than men.

So it says women must be dressed in proper clothing modestly and discreetly. So that's what we say. We don't go beyond that.

And I say when a man looks at a woman he can know immediately immediately within one second and all of you men know this, whether she's modestly dressed or not. It's very difficult to define it and that's why I don't try to define it. That's why I tell young girls ask your father he's got the eyes of a man to tell you whether you're dressed modestly or not.

And if your father tells you, my girl I don't think you should be dressed like that. It will tempt men in the church. Listen to your father.

That's what I say. Or listen to your husband. If he's bold enough to tell you the truth, sometimes you'll love him.

If he's bold enough to tell you the truth, he'll tell you. But he'll dress modestly. Now the reason I say that is many women don't realize how strong the sexual urge is in a man, because they don't have such a strong urge themselves.

They don't realize how quickly a man can be tempted just by a tight fitting dress or an extra showing of flesh in a woman. And they don't realize it. That's why they need the help of a husband or a father to tell them.

And if you come to a church where people are trying to be holy and you dress in a way that you make it more difficult for the men sitting there by the way you dress, let me ask you, do you think God will spare you in the day of judgment? What you do out in the world, God will deal with. But if you come to the church and dress like that, let me tell you the truth, you will not escape the day of judgment. That's not legalism.

That's just holding spiritual standards. And in many other areas, when we proclaim a standard mentioned in scripture, there are people who want to be disobedient who call it legalism. It's not legalism.

Legalism is where we try to make standards which are not mentioned in scripture. You know, little, little things like the Pharisees would say, why do you pluck grain on the Sabbath day? Why do you carry your bread on the Sabbath day? God never spoke about all those things. They make extra rules which are not in the Bible.

So legalism, remember, is extra rules that you make which are not in the Bible. Okay, another question is Can you please explain how the church treats the issues of separation and divorce and remarriage of the members? There have been many debates and different views on these issues. Can they be part of the worship team and etc., other roles in the church? How do we have to restore the families that are affected? Well, let me tell you two things.

One is getting divorced is evil. Because God says in Malachi 2 I hate divorce. He said that very clearly.

And Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5 that if a person divorces his wife, he's committing adultery. The three types of adultery that Jesus spoke about in Matthew chapter 5. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 27 physical adultery 28 lasting with the eyes adultery and 3 verse 32 divorce. The three types of adultery.

Lasting with the eyes, physical adultery and divorce. All three are called adultery by Jesus Christ. And therefore it's a very serious sin.

Adultery is a very serious sin because it's violating another person created in the image of God. And the physical sexual union is reserved by God only for marriage. Never, never outside of marriage.

Any sexual union is sin outside of marriage. So that's the first thing. And then if you, Jesus said that if you marry someone who is divorced, you commit adultery.

Matthew 5.32. So that is the standard in the church. So what about a person who wants to be an editor? Again it's laid down in the First Timothy in chapter 3 that a man cannot be an editor unless he's the husband of one wife. A divorced person.

He's got two wives. The one he married first, the one he divorced and he married another one. So he can't be an editor.

And further down it says in the Deacons verse 12 he must also be the husband of one wife. So those who are in spiritual leadership must not be divorced. And those who are in lower level servant leadership in other forms in the church must also not be divorced.

So those standards we maintain I know that most Christians in many churches have lowered the standards of even pastors of course nowadays. But that's just indication of the decline going on in Christendom. Like in the area of money, like I spoke about.

There's been a decline in the area of money, marriage, and many many other areas. So we preserve the standards mentioned in Scripture in these areas. And it doesn't mean they can't be forgiven.

Divorce is not the unforgivable sin. God will forgive anybody who sins. Divorced, never had it.

And even if they divorced when they were unconverted, they repent, God forgives them. But even if God forgives them, they still got two wives. So did all the others.

They got a special ministry in the church. It's like, you know, I've met people in India who had AIDS. AIDS.

In their unconverted days. And they repented. And they were forgiven completely.

But they died of AIDS. They reaped what they sowed. Because forgiveness does not eliminate some of the physical consequences of sin.

So if you, for example, you've watched a lot of internet pornography in your life, and then you repent, God forgives you immediately. But for the next 50-60 years, you'll have all those dirty dreams which you stuck into your mind. You're not going to escape that.

You reap what you sow. You're forgiven. But the consequences of your immorality will haunt you for the rest of your life.

You'll probably have a very difficult sexual relationship in marriage, and a very unhappy marriage as well. Because you're reaping what you sow. But you'll be forgiven.

So, there's a difference between God's forgiveness, and we do reap what we have sown. There's no doubt about it. I've seen it again, and again, and again.

So, we can't take advantage of God's goodness. That's why He allows us to reap what we have sown. If He did not allow us to reap what we have sown, we would have taken sin more lightly.

So therefore, we take a very strong, not strong, biblical stand on the matter of divorce and remarriage. But they are forgiven, and so, I say, they are really born again, and sincere. They can come and break bread with us.

But we would not give them any spiritual responsibility in the church. That may be another question. We'll stop with this for now.

Let's just bow before God. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You that Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Help us to walk in that light so that our life becomes brighter and brighter, more filled with the love of God and love for others.

We pray in Jesus' name.

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