

What It Means To Grow Spiritually

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God by presenting our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to Him. It challenges believers to examine their lives, cut off sin piece by piece, and offer themselves fully to God. The message highlights the need to renew our minds to align with God's thoughts and to worship Him in spirit and truth.

Scripture: Romans 12:1, Romans 12:2, Matthew 16:24, John 6:38, 1 Corinthians 11:31, Acts 24:16, 1 John 3:2, Hebrews 4:15

Topics: "Surrender to God", "Renewing the Mind"

Description

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Transcript

Let's just pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we thank you for these dear brothers and sisters who are eager to hear your word, and we pray that your presence will be with us, Lord Jesus, otherwise we are wasting our time. We lean upon you, we ask you to fill us, anoint us with the Holy Spirit for this ministry, and even though we are separated by distance, there is no distance with you.

Where two or three are gathered in my name, even if they are thousands of miles apart, you said, I am in the midst. Thank you, Lord Jesus, you are here. Help us to sense your presence and to hear your voice through the Holy Spirit, we pray in your name, amen.

Okay, brothers, I think if you were to ask most Christians, most genuine believers, about whether they are satisfied with their Christian life and the progress they are making spiritually towards becoming more Christ-like, which is our goal, if they are honest, most Christians would say, we are not happy with the way we are progressing and we wish it were far better. So we need to ask ourselves, why is that? It was like that in my own life for a number of years after I was born again. If I were to draw a graph of my life, soon after I was converted, the graph went up because I was a serious Christian.

And then as I got involved more and more in the ministry, and that's what happens when you get involved in the ministry and you become well-known and people come to know about you, and you don't have

fellowship. And I didn't have a local church those days. And gradually I found in my life, the graph began to go down and it went down pretty low.

Externally, my testimony was perfect. I wasn't misappropriating money anywhere. I wasn't fooling around with women.

All that was okay. Outwardly, it was great. But my inner walk with the Lord and my thought life was terrible.

And I got so fed up with my life that a time came in my life when I said, this is nearly 50 years ago, when I said, Lord, I want to stop preaching because I'm a hypocrite. I'm saying things which are not true in my own inner life. It's true.

What I'm saying is true. And it impresses people and they are challenged also, but it's not true in my own life. So I'd rather quit and find a secular job.

I won't stop being a Christian. I'll still be a Christian. I know that Jesus has saved me, but I'll stop preaching unless, and this is a condition I made with the Lord, unless you do something in my life where my inner life responds exactly with what I'm saying.

In other words, my aim was zero hypocrisy. I remember years ago, visiting a car factory in India, and I saw a board, which the manager had put up there on the wall saying, we aim for zero defect, and I've never forgotten that. I saw that more than 50 years ago.

And I said, Lord, I want to aim for zero defect in my life. In my speech, in my thoughts, in my attitudes to people, in the genuineness of my love, in genuine Christ-like humility, in my attitude to money, in my attitude to women, every area, I want to aim for zero defect. Now, I know that I will be like Jesus only when he comes, because the word of God says in 1 John 3, that we shall be like him when we see him.

Let's begin with that verse. Please turn with me to 1 John chapter 3. You're all familiar with this verse. Beloved, now we are children of God.

And I think most, if not all of you will say, yes, you're a child of God. You know that. You're born again.

There was a time in your life when you repented and received Christ into your life. I hope you repented before you received Christ in your life. Because most preaching in the world today speaks about believe, believe, believe.

There's very little preaching on repent, repentance. And yet God has joined these two together. What God has joined together, let no one separate repentance and faith.

I've always preached repentance and faith together. So if you've genuinely repented and believe, then you're born again. If you have not repented and you just believe, you're not born again.

I want to tell you that. And that may be the cause of the problem of some of you. But assuming that most of you have really repented, and that repented doesn't mean you've overcome sin.

Overcoming is different from repenting. Repenting means you've turned around, according to the military term, about turn. So it's turning our back to the world and sin and turning our face to God.

It doesn't mean I've reached the goal. The Christian life is a race, and it's a long way before I can reach the goal. But it's a race that we have to run.

And the finishing line, the starting line of the race is being genuinely born again. The finishing line of the race is when Christ comes again and we will be like him completely. So it says here, now we are children of God.

That's where we begin. But it has not yet appeared where we will be. That's what the finishing line of the race.

We know that when he appears, we will be like him. Not before that. We will be like him only when he appears, and because we will see him as he is.

Verse three, everyone who has this hope, now for many years in my life, if you'd asked me what is my hope, my hope is that I'm going to see Jesus face to face and come again. But that's only half the hope, according to this verse. The full hope is I will be like him because I see him as he is.

And I never saw that for many years, even though it's written there plainly, and I doubt whether some of you have seen it. What is your hope? Is it that Christ comes again, you're going to see him? That should be the second part of it. I'll be like him when I see him.

What's the use of seeing him if I'm not going to be like him, if there's going to be sin in my life for all eternity, even one sin. I don't want to live in eternity like that. I hope you have a passion to be like Christ.

And how do we know? It's very easy for us to say, yeah, I have that hope, intellectually, yes. But how do you know whether you really have it? Well, it says here in verse three, you will purify yourself just as he is pure. In other words, your goal is total Christ-likeness.

Even if it takes a long time to get there, you're going to make progress. That's the point. This year has just begun, one month is over, 2021.

You should be ahead of where you were in 2020. Examine yourself. God has made the earth to go around the sun in 365 and a quarter days.

And that's a good period of time by which we can evaluate ourselves and see whether we've made progress. Just like our children, we want them every year to go from one class to the next class. We don't want any of our children to be sitting in the same class every year.

We want them to progress to the next class. And as much as you parents are eager that your children go from one standard or one grade to the next every year, you should be eager to make sure that you are also progressing in the way you speak to your wife. Ask her whether there's a progress.

In the way you speak to your husband, ask him. Don't yourself form an opinion. Allow your partner to be honest with you.

It'll help you. She's given to be your helper. A helper to make you more Christ-like.

Even if she's unconverted, God can use that. Use an unconverted wife to make you more Christ-like by giving you more patience, et cetera. But evaluate yourself, very important.

Now the reason I say this is because if you go a little earlier in this section, you know, in John's letter, there were no chapter divisions. These are only made for our convenience. It was one continuous letter.

And earlier on in the letter, in relation to the second coming of Christ, he says in chapter two, verse 28, little children. He's talking to believers. He will not address unbelievers as children.

Little children. Abide in Christ so that, again, he's talking about his coming. When he appears, we may have confidence or boldness and not shrink away in shame at his coming.

That verse clearly teaches that among little children, among believers, among born again believers, when Christ appears, there are going to be two categories of people. Now, we know they're going to be two categories of believers and unbelievers. It's always there.

But here, if you read carefully, it's referring to two categories of believers. He's talking about little children. Little children, I'm writing to you, John says.

One group of believers are bold. They say, praise the Lord. Lord, we've been waiting for you.

We're ready to meet you. Everything in our life is set right. And there is another group that says they shrink away.

Oh, Lord, we didn't know you're coming so soon. We're not ready. There are things we are not set right.

There are debts we have not repaid. There are people we have hurt whom we have not asked forgiveness from yet. There are people who hurt us whom we have not forgiven.

There are a lot of things we have to set right. Lord, please wait. Please wait.

Can you wait one more day? They shrink away in shame. Now, let's be honest. Today, if Christ were to come before I finish this message, are you going to be in group that has boldness and say, yes, Lord, I'm ready to meet you? Or are you going to be in that other group that shrinks away in shame? In shame, because we're not ready.

The purpose of scripture in the New Testament is to help us to grow towards Christlikeness. Earlier on in the same chapter, 1 John chapter 2, John says, If you say this is one of the most challenging verses in the entire New Testament. It is one of the most challenging verses in the entire New Testament.

And that's why a lot of people skip over it. Don't skip over it. 1 John chapter 2, verse 6, the one who says he abides in Christ must walk in the same way he walked.

These are two different things. 1 John 2, 6, we have to walk as he walked now. 1 John 3, 2, we will be like him when he comes.

What is the difference between these two verses? Walking is a conscious act. Normal people don't walk in their sleep. It's a conscious act.

You take one step and the next step and the next step. So when it says about walking as he walked, it's referring to the conscious part of our life. The area of our life, which we know whether we are right or wrong.

Do you know that there's a huge area of our lives where we don't know whether we are doing what is right. In fact, we discover it as we grow spiritually. That's one mark of growth is that you discover more and more in your life of areas where you're not Christ-like.

And you judge yourself and repent and make progress. That is when an unconscious part of you suddenly becomes conscious to you at a certain time. For example, you may suddenly discover that all these years of your married life, you're not being very gentle and gracious in the way you spoke to your wife.

You took advantage of her, perhaps, or to your husband. And you suddenly get light on it and you begin to change, you repent. Or you discover that even though you were generally righteous in money matters, as the world recognizes, you were not faithful in money.

Jesus did not tell us to be righteous in money. That is one level. He told us to go one step higher and be faithful with money.

Do you know the difference between being faithful with money and righteous with money? There's a world of difference. Righteous with money means I don't cheat anybody. I don't have any unrighteous income in my bank account.

I've paid all my taxes. I don't owe anybody anything. Everything I have in my house is righteously paid for and bought.

No corruption. I'm not earning money in a wrong way. And my standards of righteousness in money matters is not at the level of others around me.

The world people say, everybody does it. Well, everybody does it. Everybody's going to help.

I'm not going to do something just because everybody does it. It would Jesus do it. Is that the way Jesus would handle money? But that is righteousness.

But faithfulness is a step higher. And if we walk with the Lord, he gives us light on it. And that is to see that even though I'm righteous with money, do I recognize that everything I have is not mine, but is the Lord's.

And do I use it in a way of recognizing this is not my money. This is the Lord's money, which he's allowing me to use. I've got to be careful with it.

Not just righteous with it, but careful how I spend it. So that's just one area. There could be many, many other areas where unconscious becomes conscious.

So walking as Jesus walked is a conscious area of our life where I know my conscience tells me that was wrong. The way you spoke or the way you did that, or that attitude towards that person, or the motive with which you said that was just to get some honor for yourself. Sometimes after we have done something, the conscience convicts us and say, hey, there was quite a bit of pride in you in the way you did that or spoke that conscience.

As soon as the conscience convicts us, we must confess it and forsake it immediately. Never, never postpone what your conscience says. If you want to walk as Jesus walked, number one rule is keep your conscience clear and obey the voice of your conscience always.

This is one of the rules the apostle Paul had. Turn with me to Acts of the Apostles in chapter 24 and verse 16. Acts 24, 16, Paul tells us one of the rules he had in his life.

Paul was a very disciplined man. And he says one of the rules he had in his life, Acts 24, 16 is he at all times, the word always means 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Paul maintained his conscience absolutely clear before God and before men like the two arms of the cross.

Before God and before men. Always remember this. Love God with all your heart.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Keep a conscience clear before God and clear before men. That's how Paul maintained it.

And he says one of the reasons why he did that was in relation to the second coming of Christ. He says in the first part of verse 16, in view of this, because of this, I'm keeping my conscience clear. Of course, his primary reason he kept his conscience clear, I'm sure, was because he loved Jesus, because he had been purchased and he was a child of God.

And he wanted to please his heavenly father. He wanted to please Jesus Christ. That was the number one reason.

But also, in addition, because he knew that verse 15, in view of this means, Acts 24, 15, there will be a resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked. Do you know that there are going to be two resurrections? You read that in Revelation chapter 20. There's a resurrection of those who are truly born again.

And then years later, a resurrection of the unrighteous. So two different periods of time and people are going to be not everybody's going to be raised up of the dead are not all going to be raised on the same day. Two separate resurrections.

And Paul says that here. There was certainly, there's no doubt about it, a resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked. And I want to be in the resurrection of the righteous.

So what do I do? I don't just sit back and say, well, 20 years ago, I accepted Christ as my savior and I'm okay. I'm going to church regularly. I'm not killing anybody.

I'm not committing adultery. I'm okay. No.

He says, in view of this, I keep my conscience absolutely clear all the time, but that is only the first step. I told you, that's only the conscious area of our life. I illustrate the conscious and unconscious area of our lifeline with a, if you take a cube of ice and put it in a glass of grape juice, where you can't see what's under the surface, 10% of that ice cube is on top.

90% is hidden. Our life is like that. What you see as wrong or right in your life, you think you're holy.

No, you're not. It's only 10%. There's a 90% within you of unchristlikeness, which you're unaware of.

But if you take a knife and slice off that top 10% of that ice cube, slice it off, what will happen? And then put it back into the bottle of grape juice, something more comes up. Whatever you slice off, that ice cube doesn't remain under the surface. Something that is hidden comes up.

Still 90% is hidden, but it's a smaller amount. Something like that that happens when we walk with the Lord. Walk as Jesus walked.

Walking is a conscious step, conscious act. Being like Christ is unconscious plus conscious, our total personality. That's going to happen only when Christ comes again, when we be like him.

But till then, in our conscious life, we can walk. And that means in that 10% of our life, which we see, we can walk as Jesus walked in righteousness, in humility, in love to everyone, as far as we know, in seeking the glory of God and no honor for ourselves, et cetera, keeping our conscience absolutely clear. But as I said, Paul recognized that that was not the whole thing.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 4, where Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 4, he gives his own personal testimony. He says, I am conscious, again, that word conscious, that 10%, what a conscience tells him, according to my conscience, I'm not aware of anything wrong in my life, nothing. My conscience is not 99% clear.

It's 100% clear. It's the same thing he says in Acts 24, 16, always keep a clear conscience before God, and before men, means I'm ready to ask. I have asked forgiveness from everybody I hurt.

I have forgiven everybody who hurt me. I have set all matters right, financial matters, everything. I've judged my motives.

I've judged my attitudes to people. My conscience is clear. But he says in 1 Corinthians 4, 4, he doesn't mean that by I'm acquitted.

Acquitted is a court word. In a court, a judge condemns a person or acquits a person. Acquits means the judge says, go free.

You're not guilty. He says, even though I keep my conscience perfectly clear, I cannot say I'm not guilty. Because he recognizes there is this unconscious area of my life, which the Lord examines.

1 Corinthians 4, 4 is a great word that explains this. And if you are really been walking with the Lord, you have found from experience the reality of this. All those who've been walking with the Lord would have discovered that they saw something in their life at a certain stage, which for years before that, they didn't even realize was sin.

Now they realize it's sin. Even in money matters, we find God raises our standard. And we realize, hey, that's a wrong attitude.

It's not just that I cheated anyone, no. Do you know that the love of money itself is a sin? And we are all born with the love of money. It's not only rich people who love money.

We've all seen homeless people, beggars. Have you ever seen a homeless person or a beggar who doesn't love money? They love money thoroughly. And the rich people love money too.

It doesn't depend on your bank balance, whether you love money or not. It is inbuilt in us, every child of Adam. Just like sexual desire and the temptation to sin sexually is in every person.

Maybe a little less in women than in men, but it is there in everyone. And if you recognize something is there, you'll fight it. If you don't recognize it or you pretend it's not there, you just sink into the pit where all

humanity is sunk.

So we progress is where that ice cube becomes smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller. We are becoming more and more Christ-like. As we walk with him and we have to examine ourselves.

1 Corinthians chapter 11. This is a word that has tremendously challenged me and comforted me. 1 Corinthians in chapter 11, verse 31.

1 Corinthians 11, 31. If we judge ourselves rightly, and that word rightly is very important. We will not be judged.

What does that mean? You know, in the final day, we're all going to stand before the Lord and be judged. Including believers. There are two judgment seats.

One is called the great white throne judgment seat of almighty God. You read in Revelation 20, where only unbelievers stand. But then there is another judgment seat, which is called the judgment seat of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians, in chapter 5 and verse 10. And that's, that's not for unbelievers. That's for believers.

We, Paul says to the Corinthians, you and I are going to stand not at that great white throne judgment seat of God described in Revelation 20, but at the judgment seat of Christ. So that we believers can be rewarded according to the deeds we did in our body, whether they were good or bad. Not everyone is going to get the same reward.

That's very clear. Jesus made it very clear. There are many stories he said of people to whom he gave money.

He used a parable of a man went out. On a long journey and gave money to his servants to invest. And some people brought back 100%.

Some people brought back 50%. And each was rewarded according to what they produced. And some people did nothing with what God gave them.

The guy had one talent and he just buried it. And he was cast out. So there are areas where we are different in gifts and abilities, and we'll be judged according to our, the gifts God has given us.

For example, if God has given me a gift of preaching, for example, or teaching, and also not only the gift of teaching, but the opportunity to travel to many countries and physically and through Zoom and through YouTube, much more will be expected from me than from you. To whom God may not have given the same gift of preaching or the same opportunity to reach people around the world. So I'm going to be judged by a much higher standard with what I did with my gift than you are.

So that's like one person that was given five and another person was given two, another person was one. And you had to produce 100%. Man who had five brought five, a man who had two should bring only two.

So God doesn't judge all of us equally when it comes to gifts. But there's another parable where Jesus said there were 10 servants and he gave each of them one talent. Everybody had only one.

One is in Matthew 25, the other is in Luke 19, I think, where the person who had one talent produced 10. Another person who had one talent produced only five. So both were equal when they started.

That is not referring to gift. Those two parables, one about the pounds and the other about talents. One is related to gifts, where it's five, two, and one.

But the other is one, one, one. And someone produced 10. And what is the one area where all of us are equal? When it comes to gifts, we are definitely not equal.

Opportunities, for example, mothers with many children. They don't have opportunity to travel here, there, and everywhere to preach the gospel. They're not going to be required to do that.

They're going to be faithful with their own, the way they bring up their children. But what is the one area where we are all equal? Two areas, actually, where we are all equal. One talent to each person.

Some produce 10 with it. Some produce five. Some produce nothing.

First of all, all of us have got 24 hours a day. Nobody gets 25. Nobody has 23.

What you do with the 24 hours is up to you. What another person does with the 24 hours is up to him. And there, one person may be more faithful in his 24 hours than you are.

But he had the same opportunity as you. The second area where we all have the same amount is in the lusts in our flesh. Nobody has more lusts.

Don't think that that person has less lusts. Temperaments may be different. Temperament has got nothing to do with the lusts of the flesh.

Temperament, some people are very outgoing and extroverts, and some people are very inward looking and melancholic. That makes no difference. Those are temperaments.

But if you look inside that man's mind and heart, you'll find the extrovert and the introvert have got the same number of lusts. The lust of the flesh, to be tempted. And basically, it is to be, basically, sin is doing your own will.

And holiness is doing the will of God. This is, through the years, I've discovered all sin is not, you know, lusting after women or stealing money or telling a lie. No, no, no, no.

Those are all the external results or actions. Basically, from within, it is doing my own will, where self is in the center or sitting on the throne and saying, I want to do this. You want to do this.

You want to lust, or you want to steal, or you want to tell a lie. It's that will that produces that sin. And so, that's, if the will is crucified, you overcome sin.

And you need the power of the Holy Spirit to do that. That's why in the Old Testament, nobody could overcome sin. They could overcome external sins.

That's why the Ten Commandments only dealt with external sins. But Jesus came and expanded that in the Sermon on the Mount and said, listen, the external adultery starts with the root of lusting in the heart. Get rid of the root.

We can say that the Old Testament was where God gave people a pair of scissors to cut off the fruit as soon as it appears. Whereas John the Baptist says that Jesus is going to come with an axe that's laid to the root of the trees, you read in Matthew 3. And there's a lot of difference between a pair of scissors and

an axe. A pair of scissors is as soon as a bad fruit comes into your tree, cut it off.

Another fruit comes in, cut it off. Another fruit comes, cut it off. But an axe to the root deals with the root of the problem, that the tree just doesn't produce bad fruit.

You plant another tree which produces good fruit. That is true Christianity. It's not just presenting a good image.

You know, I picture Christians like this, many Christians I've met. They're very careful, very, very careful that people going by the road should not see any bad fruit on their tree. So they keep a pair of scissors and look very carefully.

As soon as a bad fruit comes, they cut it off. And they go to the market and buy some good fruit, some good apples or something and tie it up to the tree. So everybody goes by and says, wow, what a fruitful tree this man has.

It's all a deception. This is the life of many Christians. It's presenting an image before people, which is not really true.

It doesn't come from within. It's an apple bought in the market and tied to that branch. It's artificial.

They can hang plastic apples, which look sometimes plastic apples look more real and more attractive than real apples. It's a deception. A lot of Christianity is like that.

We've got to steer clear of that. There must be no acting in our lives. You know that the word hypocrite, which comes often in Jesus speak about hypocrisy.

Hypocrite is not an English word originally. It's a Greek word. And the word hypocrite in Greek means actor.

And so when it's translated in the New Testament, it's written in Greek. When it talks about hypocrisy, it's talking about acting. So when Jesus said, don't be a hypocrite, when he meant it, don't be an actor.

The Pharisees were accused of hypocrisy, of acting. You know what acting is? You saw all these Hollywood movies. There are some biblical movies where some guy will act like Moses, a holy man of God in the movie, as long as the movie is being shot.

And once the day's film shooting is over, he goes back home to live his drunken life with his third wife or whatever it is, and fools around with women and et cetera. That's his real life. And the next day, film shooting starts again.

Again, he puts on the dress of Moses. That is acting. He's not really holy.

He's just pretending to be. And that's what a lot of Christians do when they come to Sunday morning church service. That's when the film shooting begins and they're acting, holy, singing praises to God, which they don't mean.

I'll give you an example. Think of the songs you sing in the Sunday services and ask yourself, you see hypocrisy. I mentioned hypocrisy because that is one of the major areas of unconscious sin, which we need to get rid of.

And if you really seek to walk with the Lord, he will make you alert to it. I told you that in 1 Corinthians 11, this verse I was telling you, that if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. What does it mean? That means if I judge myself, like in these areas of hypocrisy, I'm talking about where I see, hey, I'm acting.

I've got to get rid of that or any other area. I judge myself in areas where other people can't see. One day when I stand at the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord will say, I've got nothing to judge you in.

Isn't that wonderful? Wouldn't you like to stand at the judgment seat of Christ when he comes again and the Lord looks at your record and the video of your whole life? And he says, I've got nothing to judge you in. You're clear. Well done, my good and faithful servant.

I want to hear that. I love to hear that. I'd give anything in the world to hear that from my Lord.

That's all I live for. That's the thing that gripped my heart many years ago. I said, Lord, the honor of men, it's rubbish.

The opinion, what people think about Zach Koonin, put it in the trash can. I'm not interested one bit in that. People can call me a prophet or a devil.

It is exactly the same to me. I can love both of them equally, not be puffed up with one comment or discouraged with the other comment because I don't live for that type of trash. I put it in the trash can immediately.

I want to live before my Lord to say, what do you think about me? I remember one saying, Lord, Lord Jesus, can you say about me, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. Oh God, if you can say that about me, I'd give anything. That's all I want.

I don't want money. I don't want comfort. I don't want honor.

That's all trash. I want to hear those words from you. Not only when you come back, I want to hear your spirit saying that to me while I'm alive right now.

You are my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. Jesus walked that way. One of the great truths I discovered in the Bible is that Jesus came to earth just like me, not with my lusts.

No, there was no sin in him. But he had a will just like I have. And he was tempted, tempted to do his own will.

And if he had yielded to his own will once, he would have sinned, but he never yielded to his own will. And that's why we say he never sinned. When we, when the Bible says in Hebrews 4, 15, he was tempted like us in all points.

He doesn't mean he had all our lusts. How could he have that? He was not born with a human father. He, the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and she was a virgin.

And so the angel told her that holy thing that will be born of you will be the son of God. He was born holy. Very clear in Luke chapter one.

And so, but he was like us in this way that he had a will of his own that he could say yes to or no to. And he always said no to his own will. This is the secret of holiness.

Turn with me to John's gospel and chapter six, John chapter six and verse 38, John 6, 38. This is the, I always call this the one sentence autobiography of Jesus. A biography is what someone writes about another person's life.

An autobiography is what a person writes about his own life. Here is the autobiography that Jesus writes about his own life. His entire 33 and a half years on earth can be summed up in one sentence.

I came from heaven. That's when he was born. And throughout his life is described in this sentence, never doing my own will, but always the will of my father who sent me.

That's a sentence that describes Jesus' own life. That's like saying he never sinned. That's like saying he always was holy.

He never did his own will. Now, if he was not even, if he didn't have a will of his own, then what is the point of saying I never did my own will? That is meaningless. It's only when I have something I can reject it.

If I don't have it, how can I reject it? He had a will of his own, just like you and I have, just like Adam had in the garden of Eden, but he never did it. There's nothing wrong in having your own will. Adam had his own will when he was created.

He's not like the planets. The planets and the stars, they don't have their own will. They just obey God thousands of years, never disobeyed God, but they cannot be holy just because they obeyed God for thousands of years.

They cannot be sinful because they cannot disobey God. The trees, they obey God according to the laws God has put in them. There's no sin there because there's no will.

Sin can come only when somebody has got a will of his own. Adam could sin because he had a will. The trees in the garden of Eden couldn't sin because they don't have a will.

The stars and planets can't sin. They don't have a will, but they can't be children of God either. You have to have your own will if you want to be a child of God.

Adam did not do God's will. He did his own will and he sinned. Jesus had the same will, and we find that struggle in the garden of Gethsemane where he said, oh father, for one hour he struggled and sweated great drops of blood and he said, not my will, but thine be done.

But he had a struggle inwardly when he was tempted as well. We don't see it. It says in Matthew 4 that the devil tempted him.

It was basically to do your own will. You're hungry. You're not stealing anybody else's food.

You've got power. You were anointed 40 days ago with the Holy Spirit. The devil's telling him.

I'm amplifying the devil's words. If you are the son of God, that's what he told him in Matthew 4. If you are the son of God and you're proclaimed as the son of God of the River Jordan when the Holy Spirit anointed you, and if you are the son of God, you've got that power. These stones, aren't you hungry after 40 days without food? Turn these stones into bread.

You're not stealing. You're not stealing somebody else's food. You're not cheating.

Yeah, and you're using the power God gave you. And you're not using the power God gave you to live some luxurious life. No, for necessity.

Food for the body. What's wrong in that? I think most of us would have fallen for that. You know, the number of preachers I know whom God gives some gift, just like Jesus received in the day he was baptized, and they use it for themselves.

One of the things the Lord taught me very early in my Christian life, especially when I quit my job in the Navy 55 years ago, we came out to serve the Lord full time. One of the things the Lord said to me was from that incident, don't use the power I have given you to get anything for yourself. Where did I learn that? Jesus had power to turn stones into bread, but he never used it.

He said, the Father will give me bread at the right time. It doesn't look like a sin. It was a very subtle devil's temptation.

Use the power God has given you to satisfy your need. And that's what the Lord told me. I have given you a gift of preaching.

Never, never, never use it to get something for yourself, money or honor or anything. That's the first temptation. I've given you the ability to write books.

Don't be like the worldly people who write books to make money. Don't be like the Christian authors everywhere who write books to make money. Give your books free.

Put it on the internet so that everybody can take and listen to it and you get nothing out of it. You don't get one cent from it. I will take care of your needs.

I tell you, all these 55 years, God's taken care of me. I tell you, my brothers and sisters, we must be a living testimony. You can be a living testimony to this truth.

I did not seek my own. God took care of me. That's how it was with Jesus.

So he did not do his own will. That is the root of all sin. When he was tempted like us, he was tempted to do his own will.

That's what it means. And he never did it. So even a simple thing like I can use the power God has given me to turn these stones to meet my own need, I will not do it.

If the father tells me to use my power for something, I'll do it. For example, when there were 5,000 people who were hungry, needed bread. Oh, then Jesus used his power to produce bread from nothing almost.

From five loaves became 25,000 loaves or more. He used his power for others. And I've discovered that God gives us the anointing of the spirit to bless others, not to exalt ourselves.

And it's a sad thing that in Christendom, we have people who use God's power to make themselves famous, to make money for themselves and take advantage of other people, to lord it over others as some king, directors and chairman and all that and make other people their servants. Our calling is to go down. This has been the challenge for me in my own life.

You know, a lot of people respected Jesus. And I know that a lot of people around the world will respect me very highly. And the Lord told me, what did Jesus do with that? He constantly went down.

His whole life was going down, down all the way from heaven. He came down, down, down, down. And the last day of his life on earth, he was found at the feet of his disciples.

He wasn't director of some organization or chairman of some organization. No, no, no, no. He was down at the feet of his disciples, washing their feet.

And the Lord said to me, go that way. You haven't gone down sufficiently until you reach the feet of your disciples and remain there till the last day of your life. Don't ever climb above that.

You are called you to be at the feet of all the other believers in the world. That's my calling. I know it.

I am to be at the feet of every single believer in the world. To wash them, to clean them, not to criticize the dirt on their feet or in their life. The multitudes of preachers only criticize the dirt in people's feet.

Oh, you're like this and you're like that. They are like this. They are like this.

But they don't tell them how to overcome it. The years in my life, 16 years of my early Christian life, I was defeated by sin. I couldn't tell anybody how to clean the feet, how to overcome sin.

But thank God that God opened my eyes to see that when you're under grace, sin cannot rule over you. Let me conclude with these words in Romans chapter 12. In Romans chapter 12 and verse 1. It says here, see Romans is a great letter explaining the gospel more clearly than any other letter or book in the whole Bible.

Clearly explaining the gospel starting from zero point all the way up to the final point. It starts with Romans 1 and 2. Godless sinners, Romans 1. Religious sinners, chapter 2. Justification by faith, chapter 3 and chapter 4 and chapter 5. And overcoming sin, Romans 6. Freedom from the law, chapter 7. The sovereignty of God, controlling everything in our life, chapter 8. The righteousness, faithfulness and the goodness of God. Sovereignty, faithfulness and righteousness of God in chapter 9, 10 and 11.

In view of all that God has done for us, what should be your response? That's the question. That's what he says here. Present your body, not your money.

No, that's Old Testament, 10%. All the people who preach 10% are old covenant priests. I'm not an old covenant priest.

I have never in my life preached or practiced giving 10% to God. I believe in giving much more than that because the new covenant is much better than the old covenant, but more than money. Do you know what God wants? Do you know what is the equivalent of the Old Testament in the new, the type, the meaning of type? There are many things in the Old Testament which have got a New Testament equivalent.

For example, coming out of Egypt is coming out of the world. Putting the blood of the lamb on the doorpost is putting the blood of Christ to overcome our sin. The Israelites going through the Red Sea is a picture of our water baptism.

The cloud coming down from above is a picture of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Entering the land of Canaan and killing the giants is a picture of an overcoming life, overcoming sin. Everything has got a

meaning.

Circumcision is a picture of crucifying the flesh. What about tithing? What is the equivalent of tithing in the new covenant? There they had to count their grain and it was not money. They were not businessmen.

Their grain and sheep count 10% and give it to God. Today, people say you count your salary and give it to God and people have a lot of arguments. Is it salary before tax or after tax? These are all covetous people arguing with, should I give God 10% after deducting tax and before deducting tax? These are people who don't love God at all.

Here we see here, the New Testament equivalent of tithing has got nothing to do with money. It's got to do with something more difficult than money. It's your body.

Present your body. In view of all the wonderful gospel I've told you in chapter 1 to 11, Paul says, what should you do? Don't give money to God. You think that's the response God wants? He owns the silver and gold in the whole world.

Why should he want your 10%? But he wants something else from you, your body. In Leviticus chapter 1, you read about the burnt offering. Don't turn there.

I just want to share with you the burnt offering. They had to put up, say, a bullock on the altar and then burn it up. But the Lord said, you must cut up the bullock into pieces.

And I thought, if you're going to blow it up, why should you waste time cutting it? There's a spiritual lesson there. Cut the bullock into pieces and put it there. So when we present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice, it is said here.

A living sacrifice. Go back to that burnt offering in the Old Testament. The equivalent is that I must put myself, you know, it's very easy to say, oh, Lord, I give myself to you.

The world is full of Christians who say that. They don't mean it. Do what the burnt offering did in the Old Testament.

Cut it up. Cut it up. Cut up your body into pieces and offer it to God.

Now you'll understand what I mean. Lord, here are my eyes. Not my body.

I'm going at piece by piece. Here are my eyes. I have used these eyes to read all types of rubbish in the past.

To look at all types of things that are sinful in the past. I never want to do that again. I put it on the altar.

It's no longer mine. It's yours. And I tell you, it's a daily sacrifice.

If anyone will come out to me, Jesus said, let him take up his cross daily. Put your eyes on the altar daily. Lord, I never want to read anything that Jesus would not sit with me and read with me.

I never want to look at anything in a way that Jesus would not look. My eyes are on the altar. And my hands, Lord.

I've done so many wrong things with my hand. Written so many letters and all with my hand. I never want to do anything wrong with my hand.

These hands are yours. I can't do what I like with my hands anymore. These legs of mine have taken me to all types of places in the past where I should not have gone.

I lay it on the altar. I want Jesus to control me where I go. My tongue especially, Lord.

This has been a tremendous problem, Lord. I lay it on the altar. I want you to control my tongue.

I want to give it to you as a sacrifice. I don't want to speak whatever I want. Very often when people speak to me in a certain way, I'm tempted to speak back.

But my tongue is on the altar now. This is what it means to be a living sacrifice piece by piece by piece. And I'll tell you this.

If you do this, your life will be transformed. Every year, you get better and better. Many people don't do this.

They don't take scripture seriously. Put it on the altar and never take it back. So many people put something on the altar.

They take it back. Is it costly? Yes. When Abraham offered up Isaac, that was the most precious thing.

He would have rather offered up 10,000 sheep. Yeah, it is going to be costly when you offer your body. God doesn't want your money.

This is the equivalent of the Old Testament type. A living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is what God accepts.

And it says here in verse one, this is real worship. Today, the world has got no idea about worship. They call praise and worship just singing some songs in the meeting and having a lot of instruments.

Real worship doesn't need instruments or songs. It is offering your body. That is your spiritual worship.

And Jesus said you must worship in the spirit. This is what worship in the spirit means. To present our body.

And then, verse two, allow our mind, body and mind, two things. A mind to be changed, to be conformed to the way God thinks. That is the meaning there.

Renewing your mind as you read God's word and submit to God's word, your mind begins to think like God thinks. These are the two ways in which we respond to the gospel. And if we do that, we will have boldness when Christ comes again.

We look forward. So, brothers, no one message is complete in itself. I have shared something in this one hour to challenge you.

If there are things you couldn't understand, ask God to explain it to you. God is a jealous God. He wants the Holy Spirit to talk.

He wants to talk to you personally. So if there's something I left out or something that is not clear, go to the Lord. Judge yourself so that in the day of the final judgment, you will not be judged.

May God bless you and help us to be faithful till he comes again. Thank you all for listening patiently. And if you are blessed, apply it in your own life, first of all.

And share it in humility with others, not to get honor for yourself. Share what you received in humility. Let it come forth from your life, not from your mouth.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, take a few moments, brothers and sisters, to close your eyes and you're talking to Jesus. You're talking to your Heavenly Father.

Respond to the word of God that you heard. Say, Lord, I want to make a beginning. Here is my response.

I want to do your will. I haven't understood it all, but help me in my daily life to progress in Christlikeness. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. So before I close, I want to introduce my better half. Annie is my wife, and she's the heart that pumps the blood while I speak.

That means she prays for me, and she wanted to just say hello to all of you. She's not going to give a sermon. She just wanted to say hello to all of you.

We have been co-workers together. Happy co-workers in the Lord's Vineyard. For 52 and a half years.

Very blessed years, and we're very thankful that the Lord's given us the privilege to serve you and other people. God bless you. You already heard good advice from my husband.

And we, as moms and wives, can support our husbands to build our houses, like our homes, like the wise man built his house on the rock. We can become wise women and support our husbands to build our homes so that our children can grow up in a godly way, and they can see our lives, that we are living to please the Lord. Jesus, not grumbling or complaining about our circumstances, and trying to live within our means.

Not to expect more than what we can afford. Be content with what we have, especially in these days when there's so much of hardship. In those ways, we can support our husbands, and we can build a strong home that will stand all the testings.

We faced a little bit of testing this last year through this COVID. Maybe, and it's easing out, but maybe more testings will come. But we can do our part and have a good future for our children with the Lord's help.

Amen.

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