

Where Christianity Becomes Profiteering

by Zac Poonen

True spirituality is about living a life centered in God, hating iniquity and loving righteousness, and seeking God's glory and kingdom first.

Duration: 59:31

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:20

Topics: "Christian Integrity", "Godly Priorities"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the dangers of seeking personal gain in the name of Christianity, using examples from the stories of Balaam, Gehazi, and Naaman. It highlights the importance of not exploiting others for personal benefit, but rather focusing on blessing others and putting God first in all aspects of life.

Transcript

You know, as I've observed Christians, mostly in our own churches, through over 30 years now, like any father would be concerned about the growth of his children. I have sought to see whether people are growing spiritually. And what is the mark of spiritual growth? It's when we don't grow spiritually that we have problems with bad moods, difficulty in overcoming our temper, difficulty in overcoming lustful thoughts and lustful looks, and depression, constant financial problems, getting into debt.

Many of these things are the result of a lack of spiritual growth. So, we need to see what is the mark of spiritual growth. If we think that spiritual growth is knowing more of the Bible, understanding more, then one who has grown most spiritually is the devil, because he knows the Bible and understands it very clearly.

That's not the mark of spiritual growth. Is it attending meetings? No, that's not it, because the devil attends more meetings than any of us do. So, what do you have more than the devil? He knows the Bible better than you.

He knows the doctrines better than you. He attends more meetings than you. And he's got all the religious language.

He looks like an angel of light, better than any of us look. It says about Jesus, and these are words that in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 9, why the life of Jesus was perpetually full of joy, even when he went to the

cross. The joy set before him in the order of the cross.

Hebrews chapter 1, it says here in verse 9, concerning Jesus, you have loved righteousness and hated iniquity or lawlessness. Therefore, God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. There are many places in relation to Jesus where it says therefore.

I don't have time to show you all of them. Hebrews 5, 7, God heard his prayer because he feared. He feared God the Father, therefore, God heard his prayers.

Or Philippians 2, 5 onwards, he humbled himself, was obedient to death, therefore, God exalted him to the highest place. Wherever you find the word therefore, it means that it was not automatic. Not because he was a son of God, his prayers were heard, or he was exalted, or he was anointed with joy, no.

Therefore means it's a law. A stone was thrown from the roof, therefore it fell to the ground because of the law of gravity. Everything is by law.

A plane takes off against the law of gravity because of another law, the law of aerodynamics. So, therefore, is a law that can apply to us. What God did for Jesus, he will do for us.

He exalted him because he humbled himself, he will exalt you if you humble yourself. God heard Jesus' prayers because he had a godly fear. He will hear your prayers and mine if we have the same godly fear.

And look at this verse, he was anointed with the oil of gladness more than anybody else on the face of the earth. More than all his companions, means his friends, and we are his friends. You've often heard me speak about this verse because I find very little lasting eternal joy among God's people.

I see a lot of God's people who smile on Sundays and they're singing God's praises, but continuous 24 hours a day, seven days a week, joy is very rare to find among believers, even in our churches. Despite all the wonderful truths we have heard about the new and living way, about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, about the new covenant, about the overcoming life, about victory over sin, despite all this, having heard this for so many years, it's a rare person in our midst who can say, yes, by the grace of God, I rejoice in the Lord always. There must be something missing which prevents us from having this continuous joy.

The answer is here. There is no partiality with God. What he did for Jesus, he will do for you.

You must believe that. That's why the secret of godliness is seeing that Jesus came in the flesh and lived a pure life, which no human being had ever accomplished till then. If you haven't seen that, you'll never be able to live a holy life, even if you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and you need to let the Holy Spirit show you the glory of Jesus, who lived in a flesh like ours, with a will of his own, which he never yielded to. He always did his father's will. He hated iniquity.

He didn't just avoid iniquity. He hated it. He didn't just do righteousness.

He loved righteousness. He hated sin with a passion. He loved righteousness and holiness with a passion.

Therefore, God anointed him with joy, with a passion. You know, made him so full of joy then. He was never moody, never depressed, never gloomy, never for a single moment.

Dear brothers and sisters, can you imagine how that will transform your life? Your life will become like a little heaven. Your home will become like a little heaven. If you say, Lord, I'm determined to come into this life at any cost.

And in order to come there, we need to have an understanding of what is it which is iniquity. What is the root of lawlessness and what is the root of all righteousness? And that is also what I've said many, many times, symbolized in the two trees in the Garden of Eden, one which would bring death, the other which would bring life. We could call the tree of knowledge a good and evil, the tree of death.

Because God said, if you eat of it, you'll die. And the other tree, we could call the tree of life. So here are two trees, tree of death, tree of life.

Basically, what God was telling Adam was, if you live a life centered in yourself, you will die. If you live a life centered in me, God says, you will live. The root of all sin is to live a life centered in self.

The root of all holiness is to live a life centered in God. That's why Jesus said to people who had heard Old Testament prayers for so many years, you know, his disciples. They had read the Psalms and the Psalms are full of Old Testament prayers.

Lord, don't let that enemy of mine live. Don't spare him and don't spare his children. And do this for me years.

I mean, there are churches today where they get up and read one Psalm every Sunday morning. And I've often said, I wish they would read an epistle every Sunday morning instead of a Psalm. Because when you read a Psalm every morning, you don't identify who the real enemies are.

You're thinking of somebody who hurt you and say, Lord, smite him and his children. Whereas the enemy today is the devil. And his children are those little demons, those little lusts in your flesh.

If you're talking about them, OK. But if you don't identify the enemy, you're going to get into problems. But these disciples had heard the Psalms, so many prayers and Jesus said, hey, forget all that.

I'll teach you how to pray. When you pray, you don't even have to say God, say our Father. And then don't think about your enemies and your problems first.

Think about God. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done. Let that be the uppermost desires of your heart when you pray, centered in God. Then you can come to your own needs.

And even when you come to your own needs, material needs, don't pray, give me this day my daily bread, but say, give us. Think about others also. Don't say forgive me my sins, but forgive us our sins as we forgive others.

Don't say deliver me from evil, but say deliver us from evil. And then conclude with thine is the kingdom, Lord. Thine is the glory.

When I live this life, I'll give you all the glory. Thine is the honor. A few sentences.

If you understand that prayer, you've really understood true spirituality. A lot of people repeat that prayer, but no idea what true spirituality is. So when we are centered in God, that means we don't seek our own.

All the gloom and misery and unhappiness comes because we seek our own. If we stop seeking our own and seek the kingdom of God first, and seek to bless others instead of thinking what we can get for ourselves, our life will be much more spiritual, and God will anoint us with the oil of gladness. You see, real joy is not something I can produce.

I can work up something by thinking good thoughts, and a psychologist will tell us how to work up some joy. But real eternal joy, even Jesus got from his father, it says God anointed him with the oil of gladness. Now I want to tell you that real eternal joy is not something you can produce.

You can listen to a message, but you won't produce it. You've got to get it from God. When God gives you something, it's eternal.

It's part of that eternal life which he has. Eternal joy, eternal gladness is compared to an oil here. But it says here, God gives it to only some people.

Like he gives grace only to the humble. And he says, I will not judge those who judge themselves. There are certain conditions.

And God anoints with the oil of gladness those who hate seeking their own, and who love seeking the glory of God. That's a paraphrase of this verse. To love righteousness is to love seeking God's glory in everything.

To hate iniquity is to hate seeking any gain for myself. Now why is this so important in our day? Because we're living in the times that Paul spoke of to Timothy, where it says that they will heap to themselves teachers, who they will want to have their ears tickled. 2nd Timothy 4. Paul says to Timothy, 2nd Timothy 4.3, the time is going to come.

I want to read in the message Bible. When people will have no stomach for solid teaching, they'll fill up on spiritual junk food. You know what spiritual junk food is? We know what physical junk food is, which only makes us fat and not strong.

Spiritual junk food is that which makes you spiritually fat and bloated with knowledge, but not spiritually powerful and mighty to overcome depression, gloom, sin, jealousy, bitterness, etc. Spiritual junk food, catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages.

Mirages means, you know, in a desert, you imagine there's a pool of water there. It's a mirage. You go there and you find there's no water.

And that's how people are being told. There's a revival around the corner. I've heard that for 50 years.

There's a revival around the corner. It's coming, it's coming, it's coming. Where is it? It's a mirage.

There'll be a revival when people are taught not to seek their own and when preachers stop seeking their own. And the other mirage is, you'll be prosperous. Give your tithe to God or give your tithe to my ministry.

You'll be prosperous. Who becomes prosperous? The preacher. The pastor.

He buys better cars, bigger houses. Well, what are the poor people? They just keep giving. When are they going to be prosperous? It's coming, brother.

It's coming. It's coming. And they die like that.

These are the biggest confidence tricksters in our day. They're fooling everybody left, right and center and pulpits on television everywhere. Mirage.

And so, in 1 Timothy chapter 6, I want to show you this. It says here about such people. There's one characteristic about them.

In the last part of verse 5, 1 Timothy 6 verse 5, they suppose that godliness is a means of gain. That means Christianity is a means of making money. Christianity is a means of making profit.

Some benefit for oneself. If I accept Christianity, I'll get some benefit for myself. Do you know, in the history of India anyway, all over this country and I've traveled the length and breadth of this country, I've seen many, many Christians who became Christians because they get some benefit from that.

From their missionaries who came there. They could get a free trip abroad or they could get some money or a job. They would join an organization because they'd get employment.

And in a country like ours, where there's so much unemployment, well, that's a big temptation. There are people who join Bible schools all over this country because three years, you get free food and free teaching and you get a degree on top of it and you're to do nothing. And these are people who probably failed in school, not doing well in any profession and couldn't get a job, couldn't get admission in some other college, joined a Bible college.

And that's why there are so many hundreds of Bible colleges in this country. It's just a means of making money for those who run it. People who don't want to suffer as missionaries in North India will start a Bible school in South India.

Make a lot of money and imagine they're serving God and fool a lot of other people. And they imagine that they're in the footsteps of Paul and Peter. Rubbish.

No prophet or apostle ever started a Bible school in the Bible. All the false prophets came out from the Bible schools in the Bible with their degree certificates and fooled people. See, these are the days in which we live.

And just like you wouldn't go to a doctor who has come out of these Capitation Peak colleges where they pay money and become doctors without studying much, I wouldn't go to a preacher who has come out of a Bible school who just went there to make money. I'd like to know what sacrifice he made in his life to serve the Lord. I'd like to know whether this doctor I'm going to for treatment is someone who sacrificed something to study medicine or he just wanted a degree.

But people are not so careful when they go to listen to a preacher as they are when they go to a doctor. That's because they don't think that their soul is more important than their body. They'd be very careful when it comes to the needs in their body to go to a good hospital, a good doctor.

But when it comes to their soul, which is a million times more important, they seem to be more careless. And here is the two categories of preachers and two categories of Christians also. Now, we may not be

preachers.

We may not be doing things for money. But this principle of what profit can I make by becoming a Christian? What can I gain for myself by joining this church or being with this group? What can I gain for myself? That is one type of Christian. The other type of Christian, you see, here is godliness, which is a means of gain.

But it says here in the next verse that godliness is actually a means of great gain. If you're perfectly content with whatever God has given you and made you and you don't covet anything more, you're perfectly happy, you don't want anything from anybody, you're content, then there's real gain. Paul says in Philippians 3, this is the other type of Christian.

One is those who look at Christianity as a means of making money or getting some profit or benefit or gain from themselves. They would attach themselves to a church or to people to get some benefit for themselves. The other group are those, again, the word gain.

You find Paul using the word gain in relation to himself. But what type of gain? In Philippians 3 and verse 7, he says, whatever things were gain to me, I counted it all as loss for the sake of Christ. He says, I threw it away.

I wouldn't think of anything which is going to be a gain for me. In fact, I count everything as loss. Loss is the opposite of gain.

We studied in mathematics in school, gain and loss, profit and loss. Loss is the opposite of profit. You can come to Christianity or a church to get some profit for yourself.

Paul says, no, for me it's loss. There are two types of Christians, those who make some profit out of other believers and those who come to loss because they became Christians. That means they give what they have instead of gain from others.

He says here, I've suffered the loss of everything. Do I think that's a great sacrifice? No. He says, it's just like my throwing out the garbage every day into the trash can, into the garbage bin.

It's all rubbish. I threw it out. That's not a great sacrifice if I went and threw out the rubbish into the rubbish bin.

It's all the things that the world considers great. It's all trash for me. And then what did I gain? He talks about a gain here, that I may gain Christ.

So there is a gaining of Christ and there's a gaining of earthly things. And these are two types of Christians. And many of you may see it very clearly when it comes to some preacher or pastor who is doing that.

But it's good for us to focus on ourselves and see whether we belong to the right category of Christians who count everything as loss so that I can gain Christ. And all my decisions and everything is always in thinking of how can I gain Christ more, gain Christ more. Or it's the other category of how can I get something for myself out of this, how can I get something for myself out of this.

These are two completely different types of Christians. And those who are thinking of getting something for themselves, those are the ones who never come to a life of perpetual joy, who never come to a life of

perpetual victory, who never come to a life that's spoken of in the New Testament as an overcoming life. Because deep down in the root, even though they've got rid of certain bad sins and things which look bad in the eyes of others, they've got a good testimony, there is a seeking of their own gain in some way or the other.

And I want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, to allow Jesus to lay the axe to the root and say, Lord, for me, Christianity henceforth will be loss of earthly things, loss of many, many earthly things. The only thing I gain will be Christ and his nature. If you make that determination today and stick to it and allow the Holy Spirit to expose and reveal in your life the areas where you seek gain for yourself, you'll find that your whole life changes.

You'll suddenly find God anointing you with the oil of victory, the oil of gladness. Only he can give us victory. If he tried to face the giants of Canaan by ourself, we are no match for them.

Like the ten spies said, we are like grasshoppers before these giants. And the giants of sin that have ruled our life for so long, we are like grasshoppers before them. You cannot overcome those sins no matter how much you grit your teeth, no matter how much you say, well, this giant thrashed me 25 times or 500 times.

I'm going to beat him. You won't beat him. He'll beat you another time.

Because the giants of sin are too strong. Only God can give you victory. He can save you from your sins because his name is Jesus.

He is able to keep you from falling. And if we make him the one we want to gain, he'll do that. And I guarantee you'll experience a total freedom from depression, bad moods, jealousy, lust, bitterness and pride and selfishness and every wretched thing and laziness.

And the Bible will suddenly become a new book to you. Everything will change in your life. You'll experience what the Bible speaks about your whole body being full of light, which is the life of Jesus.

My personal conviction is that very few of you have experienced it. I don't know how many here can testify of experiencing that in increasing measure. I want to say to you in Jesus' name that that is God's will for you.

Don't let the devil fool you and rob you of your inheritance because of some area where you don't allow Jesus to lay the axe to the root of seeking your own gain in this world. Always think of Christianity like this. It's going to be loss of material things for me.

Loss of many earthly things, earthly honor, earthly gain, earthly comfort. And what I'm going to gain out of it is Christ and his nature. So when we look at the first temptation that Jesus faced in Matthew chapter 4, Matthew's gospel chapter 4, we read, the devil came to Jesus after he was filled with the Holy Spirit and tempted him.

Remember, this is the shrewdest and cleverest of all created beings, tempting the Son of God. He knows exactly how to tempt. He's not going to tempt him with crude things like bringing a pretty girl in front of him.

Rubbish. He knew that that wouldn't even be a temptation for Jesus. He finished with all that when he was a young teenager.

No, no, no, no, that's all for, he knows who to test people with such stuff. With Jesus, it had to be something very subtle and tricky where to the ordinary person wouldn't be able to detect it. And here's the proof of it.

What do you think is the first temptation? I mean, if you were to ask 99.99% of believers, what was the first temptation that Jesus faced? They would say, well, he was hungry and he was tempted to turn stones into bread. On the face of it, that's it. But what lies underneath it? And that's what we have got to see in the devil's temptations.

There's something underneath it. When the devil told Eve, you know, this tree, God doesn't want you to have it because you might be like him. He was trying to put into God, underneath it was to put into Eve's mind a seed of doubt about God being jealous that they might be like him.

God not being a good God, not being a loving God, not being one full of love. And that's a seed he tries to put into our mind so that we sin. So here also, to Jesus, the temptation was this.

Let me explain to you. And the devil says like this, well, 40 days ago, you were anointed, right? Never experienced anything like this before. 30 years, you couldn't do anything like this.

Now, you've been anointed with all the gifts of the spirit. You have supernatural power, which God, your father, has given you. He's pleased with you.

Use that supernatural power for some benefit for yourself. That's the temptation. Use what God has given you for some benefit for yourself.

You're hungry, right? What do you need right now? Bread. Use what God has given you for some gain for yourself. Have you seen that in this temptation? Jesus said, no.

Man will not live by bread or by making gain for himself. No. Man cannot live like that.

But by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, when God tells me to do something, I'll do it. If he gives me power, if he gives me money, if he gives me ability, I cannot use it for myself. I have to use it for others.

Did he use it when other people were in need? Sure. You remember once he took five loaves and fed 5,000 men and many women and children with that? He would use it for others, but never for himself. That's the mark of one who follows Jesus.

That the power God gives him, he doesn't use for himself. He uses it to bless others. And he will never use it to make any gain for himself.

That is the first temptation at which most preachers in the world have fallen. You know, God gives somebody a genuine gift of preaching, anointed ministry, and hundreds and thousands of people around the world want to listen to him because he's got such an anointed ministry and people's souls are being fed. They are being strengthened.

They are being edified. And some of them are rich people. And they say, we've got to bless this man who has given us such spiritual blessing.

The Bible says those who bless you spiritually must be blessed materially. So they take out their wallets, they take out their checkbooks and write checks in the name of this man. And suddenly this man discovers that he can become rich through Christianity.

He can get a lot of personal benefit by using the gift God gave him. He didn't produce it himself. God gave it to him just like Jesus had the power to turn stones into bread.

Here's a man who's got power to move people by God's word. Anointed by God, without a doubt. But to use that to get some personal benefit for himself.

And most preachers, 99% of them, have fallen. They don't even realize they've fallen. See, the great mark of a deceiver is he'll give you a counterfeit note and if you can walk away thinking you got a real one, then he's a real deceiver.

And that's the great thing about the devil. He makes a man fall and the guy doesn't even know he's fallen. And the devil and the demon sit back and laugh.

You couldn't fool Jesus. And you can't fool a man whose mind is rooted in the scriptures. You couldn't fool Paul.

Paul knew that personal gain and profit and money are a great snare and that you're not supposed to make money for yourself in the name of Christianity or in the name of the gospel. You know, we were discussing yesterday, some of us, about a very good brother who wrote a book which sold millions of copies and all of a sudden he suddenly became a multi-millionaire. Christian book.

And so what did he do? He did a very good thing which most people may not do. And that is, from the millions he made through selling this Christian book, he paid back to his church, of which he had been a pastor for 24 years, all the salary he received from the church for 24 years. And he decided not to increase his standard of living.

That was great. But think of many brothers I know in our churches who have never received a salary from the church for 24 years or 30 years. And who have never received one rupee for the books they wrote.

Who never made millions, never made one rupee. We admire a man who has given something away from millions he has made from other Christians. Did Paul make money out of the epistles he wrote? Are we supposed to make money out of Christian books that we write? Are we supposed to make money for ourselves through Christian CDs that we produce or DVDs? Or if you're a musician, Christian musicians, make music CDs and make money for it? Make money out of it? It's a first temptation.

God's given you an ability to sing. There are millions around the world who want to buy your CD, make money out of it and become a millionaire. Jesus said, no, I won't use the power God has given me to make any gain.

Godliness will not be a means of gain for me. Not only of money. What about honor? It need not be money.

It can be that I look for honor. A man can sing. He says, I don't want any money for my preaching or singing, but I want honor.

I want people to appreciate. And I get honor for myself. That's gain.

Isn't honor gain? Some people don't want money because they've already got plenty of it. But they want honor. And that's why so many preachers come to India from Western countries.

In their own country, maybe only 100 people will listen to them. But here you go to the villages, you can get 10,000 in no time at all. Just appoint an agent and give him a few thousand rupees, which is very little in dollars, and he'll gather 10,000 people without a problem.

He'll get buses and bring them all to the site and put up tents and you get your video cameras and zoom in and tell them all, raise their hands and take all pictures of all that and publish in your magazine back home. And you make money and you fool everybody that you're a great, mighty man of God whose 10,000 people come to listen to you. We who live here know the whole secret.

The whole thing's a big deception. But they fool all those people out there because they've never seen such crowds there. Everybody's happy.

That guy, the man is happy because he makes his money. The agent here is happy because he makes his money. And the people there who give money to this man are also happy because they think they're giving something to God.

And the devil's happy too because he knows nothing's happening. Well, the angels and God are sad. I'm sad too.

I hope you are. And what's happening because the name of my Jesus is dishonored. Think if your husband's name was being dishonored by people, would you feel happy? Do you feel sad when the name of Jesus is dishonored by all these things? I hope you are.

He's my husband. He's my bridegroom. And his name is being dishonored all over by these people.

And that's what makes me sad. And that's what makes me expose them. That's what makes them angry with me.

They're welcome to be angry with me. I know the devil's more angry with me than any preacher in the world. And that's a compliment to me.

But if the devil's angry with me, sure. I'm not afraid of him. Not afraid of these preachers either.

Because I fear God and therefore I don't fear anybody else. You must be like that. You must be concerned.

We live in a day when many people are teaching. Not just doing it but teaching. Even though they're examples.

You know the Bible speaks about the teaching of Balaam. What's the teaching of Balaam? Have you read that phrase in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 14? I have a few things against you, the Lord says to the church in Pergamon. Once upon a time, he says, you had a wonderful witness there called Antipas, verse 13, who stood faithful to me, who was killed.

But now I have a few things against you, verse 14 of second, Revelation chapter 2, 14. You have some people there who are holding the teaching of Balaam. Teaching of Balaam involves many things.

One of the things mentioned there is teaching people to play around with immorality, saying it's not serious, bring the anger of God. The other is seeking to get profit for oneself out of preaching. Second Peter chapter 2, we read, he says, there false prophets arose those days among the people and there will be false teachers in your midst also.

Second Peter chapter 2, verse 1. There were false prophets then in the olden times, there will also be false preachers and teachers in your midst. They will smuggle in destructive teachings and they put themselves on a fast downhill slide to destruction. And it speaks here about their greed, verse 3. In their greed, they will exploit you with false words.

This is a perfect description of a lot of television preachers today. Shall I describe them in one phrase? In their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their greed, they want to live a comfortable life, they want to have a multitude of earthly things, they want to be millionaires and they'll exploit you for people.

You see, this is what happens in one of the prominent television programs being circulated around this country. I spoke about some of this in one program and they stopped it immediately. Naturally, they don't want people to hear the truth.

It says here, these are people who have, verse 15, forsaken the right way, loved the wages of unrighteousness, or as the Message Bible says, a prophet who became a profiteer. A prophet who became a profiteer. He received a rebuke for his transgressions from a mute donkey.

Imagine a dumb donkey had more wisdom than this prophet turned profiteer. Do you know what speaking in tongues is? Speaking in tongues is speaking in a language you have never learned. Speaking in a language you have never learned.

The first example of it is Balaam's donkey, who spoke in a language it never learned. It was a God-given gift. It didn't come from the devil.

The first example of speaking in tongues in the Bible, a genuine God-given gift, was when Balaam's donkey spoke in a language it never learned. And you know what he rebuked his master for? For the love of money. I hope all who speak in tongues will recognize that.

The first time tongues was spoken was to stop a mad prophet trying to make profit out of his preaching gift. How many people who speak in tongues? The prophets, these preachers themselves are speaking in tongues. Yeah, I believe in the gift.

But the first exercise of it was to turn a man, it says, to restrain the madness of a prophet. To stop this man from what? Was he going to commit adultery? That would have also been good if he stopped him from that. That was not his sin.

He was going to make money out of his preaching gift and this donkey spoke in tongues and said, stop it, man. But he wouldn't listen. He beat the donkey.

Like people would, they beat us today not with sticks, they write articles against us. It's the same thing. I may be a donkey, but it's the voice of God.

Jesus rode on a donkey. Perfectly okay, I don't want any glory for myself. Be willing to be a donkey, but to speak for Jesus.

To be ridden by Jesus on you. And when people throw their courts in front of you, remember it's Jesus, not you. Because once he steps off, they won't throw the courts in front of you anymore.

It's good to remain humble. Thine is the glory, the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. So this matter of what did Balaam do, if you turn to the Old Testament in the book of Numbers, it's very interesting to see there.

In Numbers in chapter 22, the king of Moab, we read, sent some messengers to Balaam the prophet. And you know, by the way, if you read Balaam's prophecies in Numbers chapter 23 and 24, I tell you, that man knew something about God. Yeah, in fact, he prophesied about the coming of Jesus Christ.

In Numbers 24, 17, he said, a star will rise from Jacob. That's about the coming of Jesus. You know that Balaam prophesied about the coming of Christ? How did he know that? He was in touch with God, but he used his gift for making money and he destroyed himself.

So we read here that, you know, some people came to him and said, Balaam is, the king Balak is calling you now. Most prophets would rush if they heard that a king was calling them. The president of India is calling you to meet with you.

He wants you to come and help him. Boy, they wouldn't even pray. Balaam prayed.

Thank God this man wouldn't go just because a king called him. He prayed and God said to him, who are these people? And they have come. God said to Balaam, verse 12 of Numbers 22, do not go with them.

Can words be clearer than that? Do not go with them. Balaam said, I'm sorry, fellas. Verse 13, next morning, the Lord has refused to let me go with you.

Go and tell the king, I cannot come. Boy, that's a real prophet. But now see, kings know how to get these prophets to change their mind.

So the king sent more leaders, more distinguished people, more higher ranking people, verse 15, and said, don't refuse to come. I'll give you more honor and I'll give you more money. Verse 17, I'll do whatever you say.

Imagine a king saying, I'll give you all the gold that you want. I'll do whatever you say. I'll give you honor.

And Balaam says, no, no, no, I can't do it. Even, you know, the spiritual language, even if Balaam, verse 18, gives me a house full of silver and gold, I cannot do anything. But let me pray again about it.

Let me pray again about it. God has already told you yesterday what to do, man. You mean God has changed his mind by today? He doesn't know the future? Let me pray about it.

You know how when we find a more tempting offer with material things, you say, ah, let me pray about it. I want to do what God wants me to do. I only do the will of God in my life.

But let me pray about it and tell you tomorrow what to do. Don't condemn Balaam. You may see yourself in some of his actions.

And you know what God said to him? God said, go. In verse 20, go with them. And then verse 22, but God was angry because he was going.

And that's when the donkey stood in the way, etc. Now, how is that? Can God tell you to do something and then be angry with you? Yes, he can. That's what you've got to learn from Balaam.

Once God has told you something, don't do that. And then you say, well, I think I'll gain something from that. So you seek God again.

You know what God will tell you? Do it. You want to destroy yourself? Go ahead. Destroy yourself.

And he'll be angry with you. That is the message from the story of Balaam. You know, this man who started out as a true prophet, later on we read in the book of Joshua, he's called a witch doctor.

A sorcerer. Can a true prophet of God become a sorcerer? Yes. Balaam is the first example.

He's called a sorcerer in the book of Joshua. There's another example I want to show you in 2 Kings 5. In 2 Kings 5, we read of Naaman, the general of a heathen country, Syria. A heathen general comes to the true prophet of God, Elisha, to be healed of his leprosy.

Elisha wouldn't even come to meet him. Imagine a general of a foreign country comes and your prophet doesn't even go to meet him. These prophets had a dignity, I tell you.

I wish we had more like them today. He said, go and tell him to dip himself in the river Jordan. Naaman has never been so insulted in his life.

He's used to everybody standing attention and this prophet doesn't even come out of the house. Sends his servant. Anyway, he goes and dips himself and he was amazed.

He was absolutely healed. His flesh, verse 14, became just like when he was born. Then he came back to the man of God and he said, now I know there's a God.

He says, please, I want to give you a gift. Please take a present, verse 15, from your servant. Now Elisha came out.

Why didn't he send Galat Gehazi this time? Can you guess? I know. Because Naaman had said, I'll give you a gift. He said, yeah, sure.

Thank you very much. No, no, no. He said, I can't trust Gehazi with this one.

I've got to go and deal with this fellow myself. So when he comes with his gift, Elisha comes out and says, no. As God lives, the God whom I serve, I will take nothing from you.

God healed you, give the glory to him. Was it because Elisha sort of got money from heaven and food from heaven? No. He would receive gifts from God-fearing people who were poorer than him.

Do you hear that? God-fearing people who were richer than him. He would not take from people who were poorer than him, but he would take from God-fearing people who had more than he had. He would not take from people who were poorer than him and he would not take from someone who was God-fearing.

A person had to be God-fearing and richer than him for Elisha to take money from him to support himself. And there were very few. And so Elisha lived very simply.

Now, Naaman was certainly richer than him, but he was not God-fearing. And so like Abraham told the king of Sodom, keep your money, otherwise one day you'll say you made Abraham rich. It's God who makes me rich.

I won't take from you. Elisha said, sorry, I'm not going to take anything. You can keep your money and go home.

Be happy that God has healed you. And he was an idolater because he says that, you know, I'm sorry, you know, even though God's healed me and when I stand with the king of Syria and he bows down to the idol, I have to just stand there, otherwise I lose my job. Elisha says, okay, go and bow down to your idol.

But Gazi, when he saw this, he said, boy, verse 20, my master has allowed this Syrian Naaman to slip through his fingers without giving anything. Then he takes the name of the Lord. By the name of the Lord, I'm going to go and get something from him.

And Naaman saw Gazi running after him in verse 21, and he said, hey, is something wrong? No, nothing's wrong. But, you know, just after you left, something came up. We've just started a Bible school, you know, and two young students have come and they need some support for their Bible school.

And can you please give them 75 pounds of silver? Boy, how much is that worth? 75 pounds of silver. That's about 35 kilograms of silver. 35 kilos of silver.

It's like two suitcases full of silver. And Naaman says, oh, that's nothing. Let me give you 70 pounds.

And it says Naaman insisted, which means that Gazi said, well, no, no, no, not really. You know how people say no, no, no, no, but you know that they want it. Like people say, would you like to have a second helping? No, no, no, no, but they keep their hand away so that you put the second helping.

Or no, no, no, no, no, I don't really want it, but if you insist, okay, brother, God bless you, I'll take it. Hypocrites. So he tied up the money in two suitcases, as I said, and he gave him two sets of clothes, and he went back, and he sent it with his servants.

But before they reached Elisha's house, he told the servants, you can go back, I'll carry these heavy suitcases myself. It's pretty heavy, I'll tell you. 70 kilos, I mean, I know what it is to carry 20 kilos of, that's all they allow in their airlines, in your bags, 70 kilos.

People are willing to suffer anything if they get some money. And he hid it away, and then came with a smiling face before Elisha, and so Elisha asked him in verse 25, so Ghazi, what have you been up to? Oh, nothing much, he says. And Elisha says, you think I didn't see you in my spirit when Naaman stepped down? It's amazing what these prophets see, Naaman stepping down and Ghazi going and saying everything to him.

And he says, is this a time to look after yourself, lining your pockets with gifts, using God's blessing to line your pockets with gifts, okay? What's going to happen? You'll not only get Naaman's wealth, you'll get his leprosy, and that leprosy will not only be on you, verse 27, 2 Kings 5, 27, it'll be on your children also. He could have been the next prophet. Elisha was the next prophet after Elijah.

Ghazi could have got a double portion of Elisha's anointing and been the next prophet. Instead of that, instead of getting the anointing, he got leprosy. And I can imagine Ghazi going out and five years later, he

gets a little child, and his child grows up, and when the child is four or five years old, he says, daddy, there's a white patch on my skin, I don't feel anything there.

Why, what's that? And it's spreading, daddy. What shall daddy say? How did his son get leprosy? How do your children suffer? Because you seek your own. Because you seek to make profit out of Christianity for yourself.

Your children learn the tricks of the trade from you. They see how you behave. They see how you take advantage of other brothers in the church for your own benefit.

It's the same thing. Absolutely no difference. Good place to be in CFC where people have this and that and the other, and I can use them for this purpose and that purpose and the other purpose, and life becomes more comfortable for me.

It's not only you. Your children. You're teaching your children something.

It'll continue down generations. You can change your way today if you like, or continue the same way. You thought it was only the Pentecostal preachers? It's you.

Don't be so quick to point fingers at television preachers. See whether the same disease in yourself where you seek to get some gain out of other brothers who are kind-hearted and generous and good for your own benefit. There's nothing wrong in our asking others to help us, but I always say this.

They must get more than I get out of it. If they serve me in some way, I must pay them more than I would a secular servant. Sure.

Then you're righteous. Not otherwise. You make people do jobs for you, and you don't pay them and say, I got some free work from people in the church.

They come and do this, that, and the other. That's why you're so unspiritual. That's why you're a legalist.

That's why you're so miserable. That's why you're so gloomy. That's why you and your children are always fighting and clashing and all types of problems.

It'll continue like that till you die, until you change your ways and say, God's going to be first in my life. I will never get any gain for myself out of others. And I found sometimes it's the people who are rich who may take advantage of others, seek some benefit for themselves.

It's just like Balaam, just like Gehazi, just like Judas Iscariot. It was good for Judas to be in Jesus' church. He got a lot of money, got a lot of benefit.

I've said this before, haven't I? When you were poor, people in this church helped you. Financially, they helped you when you needed medical treatment. Today you're rich.

You're profited. Have you ever thought of returning that money to the church, which you got 15 years ago? Or you've forgotten about it? That's why your life is so miserable. Have you ever thought of using your money to give to someone who is more needy than you? Give it to the elders and say, pass it on to someone who's more needy than me.

Once I was needy, church blessed me. Today others are needy. Here, I've come with my abundance I want to give to God.

I tell you, you will become spiritual overnight. When you stop taking advantage of others, when you stop chasing after others to get, what can I get from others? Think always in terms of what can you give. You know, we have gloried in the fact that our elders in our churches, including this church, have never taken a salary from this church in 31 years.

Never got any benefit from sale of books, CDs, nothing. Never sought anything. Never got paid for their services.

Never got any benefit. You know, many of our problems will be solved when we stop this habit of seeing what benefit we can get from others for ourselves. And think how we can bless others.

You know, that's the principle in 2 Corinthians 9. Those who have much, have nothing left over because they help others. Those who have little, have no lack because others have much helped them. It's a principle we have followed through all these years.

As I said, the elders in the church here have never received anything. But who do you think are the preachers or Christians who are seeking benefit for themselves here? In other churches, it's usually the pastors and preachers. In this church, it's the people in the church who are the equivalent of those money-loving television preachers who seek benefit for themselves.

It's you, not the people who stand on the platform. That's the difference between other churches and ours. If the cap fits you, wear it.

If the spirit convicts you, face up to it and say, Lord, I'm guilty. And you husbands, don't say my wife did it. You're the head of your house.

Don't be like Adam and blame your wife. This business of blaming the wife for things that happen in the home is as old as Adam. And I've heard that excuse numerous times.

Dear brothers and sisters, it's you who have to take the responsibility and say, Lord, I don't want to pass on any leprosy to my children. I'm not preaching what I've not practiced. I've traveled in many countries.

Nobody in any country, in any country in the world can say I've taken advantage of them. My children have been in other countries. Nobody in any country in the world can say that any one of my children have taken advantage of them in the name of Jesus or being my son.

They've always paid them back more than they spent on them. Otherwise, I wouldn't have a testimony. I wouldn't have the courage to stand here and speak the truth.

This is how the devil shuts the mouths of many people today. But by the grace of God, he will never shut my mouth or the mouths of my children. Dear brothers and sisters, follow me as I follow Christ and Paul.

I'm not afraid to say that. That's not pride. It's just saying that the grace of God can do anything for you that he did for Jesus.

Amen.

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