

# Worshipping God When Suffering

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of sacrifice and service to God, and the need to fear God and seek to please Him in order to overcome our weaknesses and live a life of righteousness and kindness.*

**Duration:** 1:13:20

**Scripture:** Job 42:7, Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 5:7, Matthew 7:1, John 3:17, Hebrews 10:7, James 2:13, James 5:11

**Topics:** "Suffering And Faith", "Christian Humility"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of following the example of Jesus and Job in living a life of humility, mercy, and forgiveness. It highlights the need to focus on our own sins rather than judging others, to be merciful and understanding towards those who misunderstand or criticize us, and to trust in God's provision and guidance in all circumstances. The message encourages a life of simplicity, forgiveness, and reliance on God's grace.

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## Transcript

What I've discovered through the many years that I've been a Christian, 57 years since I was born again, is that the Christianity that is seen in the world and proclaimed by most churches is completely different from the Christianity in the New Testament. Now, most people don't know that because they don't read the New Testament carefully, and so they imagine that I'm exaggerating or something like that. They're welcome to believe that.

But for those of you who are serious, to make sure that the one life that God gives you on this earth, you're going to live according to the way God wants man to live. I desire that greatly. I have only one life.

I don't have an opportunity again to live this life. And for me, the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament and the apostles gives me a clear direction of that, that I can live in such a way that when I come to the end of it and move on into eternity, I have no regret when I look back over my life. I have a regret over all the foolish things I did in my unconverted days and those times, but we should not have a regret over the way we lived from the time we were converted.

Otherwise, conversion means nothing. A lot of people who say they're converted live just like everybody else in the world. They fight and quarrel and pursue the things of the world just like everybody else.

And I say, well, their conversion is very superficial. It's a whitewash. So, that's why we speak much in the church about the new covenant.

It's something most churches don't know anything about. Jesus abolished the old covenant, made a new covenant. Those of you who've studied American history, you know that up until 1776, the British ruled the United States.

Then the United States became a free country. Now, the question is, how many people in the United States would want to go back under the British rule today? I don't think anybody wants it. So, it's surprising that Christians want to live under the old covenant, which was abolished years ago, not in 1776, but 30 AD.

Many years ago, it was abolished. On the day of Pentecost, God finished with that old covenant. The old covenant is only temporary to teach man.

God was trying to teach man through the law, you can never come up to my standards, no matter how hard you try. Man could keep nine out of the 10 commandments, but the 10th commandment which says you must never desire anything in your heart that doesn't belong to you, that's somebody else's. You must not lust.

Nobody in the world could keep it. God says, that's my standard. If you can't keep it, you can't enter my kingdom.

It's a good thing God abolished that and showed us a way, not just to forgive us. Forgiveness was there in the old covenant too, but to help us to be free so that we can keep that 10th commandment, that we don't desire anything but God in our hearts. If you haven't come there, my brother, sister, pursue it.

This is the place God is seeking to bring us to, where we desire nothing but God in our hearts. And when we desire him, I'll tell you something, when you have nothing left but God, you'll find that God is more than enough, because he takes care of you. He won't let you starve.

No one who's ever trusted God has been a homeless person, never in the history of humanity. Nobody's ever trusted God has had to starve or seen his children starve. God provides these earthly things, but he says, I want you to recognize that your spiritual life relationship with me is priority.

So today, I want to share something, an aspect of the new covenant, which is not much spoken of. Turn with me to James chapter 5. James chapter 5, and I want to read from verse 7 to 11. Be patient, therefore, my brothers, until the coming of the Lord.

And the example he uses is, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until he gets the early and latter rain. When a farmer sows his seed, he doesn't expect a crop overnight. No.

He is willing to wait, and wait patiently many months, and then he gets a harvest. And so here it says here, that once we have sowed the seed of righteousness, and kindness, and goodness, and lived a sacrificial life, seeking to please God and blessing other people, you may not get the results immediately. Which farmer gets the result in one week, two weeks? He's willing to wait, and he says, you must wait.

How long? Until the coming back of Jesus Christ to earth. When he comes back, you'll get such a harvest, that you'll be glad you waited. And that you'll be glad that you sowed the right seeds, and poured water on your crops, and did not bother about people criticizing you, or any such thing.

Just loved them, and blessed them in return. What a harvest you'll get. So be patient.

Verse eight, and strengthen your hearts, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. Is at hand means it'll come. You know, it says 1000 years is like one day.

So according to that, God's calculation has just been two days since Jesus went up to heaven. Just two days. He's coming back.

So do not complain, brethren, against one another. Don't waste your time criticizing others, judging others. That way you won't get a good harvest.

Because the one who is to judge people is coming. He will take care of all judgment. You don't have to judge anybody.

You think something's wrong with somebody, leave it to the judge to take care of that. He'll do it. He's coming.

To me, it's been a great blessing, because my unconverted days, you know, how I was just like anybody else, judging everybody, criticizing, finding fault. We're all experts at finding fault with everybody else. Never finding much fault in ourselves.

But I've, as I've come closer to God, I'll tell you something. I have discovered more fault in myself than in other people. Because when you come close to God, the light shines so brightly on yourself.

You see things that you never saw before. And the light is shining so brightly, you know, how you look at the sun, your light eyes are blinded. It's like that when you look at God, your eyes are blinded that you can't see the faults of people around you.

It's a wonderful way to live. Because you still see so much in yourself that needs to be cleansed away before Christ comes. I hope you're living that life.

Christ is coming soon. All the evil that we see around in the world is exactly as Christ predicted, would precede the coming of the Lord. Jesus said it was like the birth pains that a woman goes through before the baby is delivered.

But the woman looks forward to the baby at the end of the birth pains and all the suffering going on. The world today is the birth pains before the coming of Christ. And then he says, as an example, brethren of suffering, and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The Old Testament examples of every prophet in the Old Testament, you know, suffered at the hands of other people who misunderstood them, criticized them in the history of God's dealings with man, God has sent his servants, and every true servant of his has been maligned, criticized, misunderstood, declared a heretic or a false teacher, etc. One day God will reveal that those were my true servants. They endured it patiently.

And he says, take an example from these prophets. And then he takes one example from the Old Testament. He says, Job, verse 11, we count those blessed who endured.

You have heard of the endurance of Job in the Old Testament and seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that even though Job went through a very painful time, the outcome, he was tremendously blessed at the end. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. And he's saying that in relation to the coming of the Lord, God may allow you also to go through a lot of suffering and trial.

But in the end, when he comes, you'll see what a harvest you get. So he says, be patient for that. You may not see the result in your earthly lifetime.

Most of the prophets did not. They were killed, persecuted, all the most of the apostles are all beheaded and killed. They did not see the result in their lifetime.

But boy, what a reward awaits them. So if you turn to the book of Job, which is quoted here, I just want to share a few things from there. If you've heard me earlier, you've heard me say that Job is the first book of the 66 books of the Bible that God wrote through man.

Not Genesis. Genesis is written, put in the first of the Bible because it describes creation. But it was written 500 years after Job by Moses.

So Job was the first book when God decided to write a book for man, the Bible, and he was going to write 66 books. The first one he wrote was Job. So it's creation, the description of creation came 500 years later.

It's almost as though God said, description of creation can wait. It's not so important. I want to speak to man about a man of God.

So the first book that God wrote in the Bible was not about the creation of the earth. It was about a man, a man whom God appreciated, a man whom God could point out to Satan and say, have you all over the earth, Satan, have you seen a man like this? Remember that, my brothers and sisters, that when God wrote his first book, he was revealing his heart, that the greatest thing he wants to see on earth today is a man or a woman whom he can point out to the devil and say, okay, Satan, there are a lot of hypocrites on the earth, a lot of people who call themselves Christians who are first-rate hypocrites, but have you seen this one? One in a million, have you seen this one? Have you seen that one? This man, that woman? A lot of churches teach a lot of wrong things and are more after your money than interested in blessing your soul, but have you seen this church? Not a mega church, but this small one here. That's the type of person I want to be.

That's the type of church I want to build. One whom the Lord can point out to Satan and say, this one is different. That's what God said about Job.

There were a lot of hypocrites in Job's day, just like there's been in the history of man. Wherever there's religion, there are hypocrites, without a doubt. And Christianity has got plenty of them.

Many counterfeits, because the original is so valuable. People make counterfeits only of valuable things, like gold and diamonds. So if Christianity is valuable, you can be pretty sure of a lot of counterfeits.

But in Job's day, there were a lot of people who were religious, but not genuine. But here was one man, and the Lord said to Satan, verse 8, have you considered my servant Job? There's no one like him on the face of the earth. A blameless, upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.

What I learned from the first book of the Bible is, it's not what man thinks of you that's important. If God can give you a certificate to the devil, you see, we know only about 10% of each other's life. You know nothing about my private life.

You don't know how I speak to my wife at home every day. You don't know, you can imagine that I'm very holy. You don't know what my attitude to money is.

You don't know whether I'm righteous and money matters. You don't know whether I pay my taxes. You don't know anything about my private life.

You see me standing up here and even one another who we meet every Sunday, we know very little about each other. We know about 10% of the most. 90% of our life is hidden, private.

No human being knows it, but the devil knows it. He sees all the things that you do in private, the way you speak to others, etc. You're handling money matters, etc.

And he's got, and he's called an accuser. He's called the accuser of believers particularly. So the purpose which Satan is watching is to accuse people who take the name of Christ and say, God, this guy takes your name.

Look how he behaves. Look how he's speaking to his wife. Look how she speaks to her husband.

This guy is supposed to be a Christian. Oh, look how he handles money. And look how he pretends to be so holy in the church and he's a downright hypocrite the rest of his life.

And what does God say? God's not going to tell a lie. He accepts it. And he says, but Satan, have you seen this one? And have you seen that one? That, if you're really concerned about the glory of God's name, that's the type of person you should long to be.

That among all the hypocrites and deceivers and people who take advantage of the name of Christ on earth, that God can point out to a few, very few. Jesus said, the way to life is so narrow, very few will find it. Do you want to be one among them? I had a great longing for many years in my life ever since I read this verse.

I said, Lord, I want to be one of those whom you can point out to the devil. I'm not bothered what people think about me or say about me. It's worthless.

They're dust. You take breath out of their body, just breath, and they become dust. Why should I worry about their opinion? The one who created me, his opinion about me is much more important.

Can you point me out to Satan? I believe that's a question you should all ask yourself. If you're serious about the Christian life, ask yourself this question. Job is one.

And it was, you know, Job was a very wealthy man, by the way, there's nothing wrong in being wealthy. If God decides to give you that. Jesus was not wealthy, he was poor.

So that's also okay. Many of the prophets are poor. Abraham was a prophet, he was very wealthy.

And Job was very wealthy. He was one of the richest men on earth, which teaches us that you can be rich and spiritual. And you can be rich and a hypocrite.

Or you can be poor and spiritual and be poor and a hypocrite. You can be rich and love money and you can be poor and love money too. Every beggar in the world loves money.

Every homeless man loves money. It's not only rich people who love money. And you can be rich and be free from the love of money.

And you can be poor and free from the love of money. Our external circumstances don't determine our inner attitudes. No.

So Job was a very wealthy man, because he had such a lot in those days, wealth was determined by the number of cattle you had. There was three sheep, camels, yoke ox and hundreds and hundreds of them. It was an extremely wealthy man.

But there was something about Job, he feared God it says. God himself said that there's a man like him who fears me and turns away from evil. Now remember, he lived at a time when there was no Bible.

He didn't know anything about the coming of Jesus Christ, which would be 2,000 years later. He lived about 4,000 years ago, Job. And he had no fellowship.

He was about one lonely man on earth living for God. In the midst of a bunch of hypocrites. We have a lot of fellowship and don't realize how much that blesses us.

But Job was a lonely man. But in spite of all that, I want to tell you about something how he lived, which tells us why God said he feared God. Turn with me to Job 31.

Job 31. Job tells us something about his inner life. It's an amazing verse.

I wonder how many men you will find on earth today like that. You know what Job says, I made a covenant with my eyes that I will not gaze at a woman to lust after her. Can you find me men like that? Today, with the Bible, with the knowledge of Jesus Christ, people talk about speaking in tongues, wholeness of the Holy Spirit, all these fantastic things.

People speak so many meetings, so many fellowship meetings, so many conferences and deeper life conferences and all of that. At the end of it all, show me men who can say, I made a covenant with my eyes that I will never lust after a woman. Job had a wife and he was satisfied with her.

And Job was an old man. His children were grown up and had their own homes. So Job's wife was an old lady.

But she was beautiful in his eyes, even though she was an old lady. And she said, you think old men are not tempted to lust after younger girls? Where is the man who can say, I made a covenant with my eyes, I will not lust after a woman. And he says something else.

See, that's one of our biggest temptations. And the other thing he says is, in verse 24, if I put my confidence in gold or in money, and my trust in money, if I have gloated, because my wealth was so great,

or because by my hard working hands, I earned so much money or my clever brain, then I deserve to be punished. That's just two areas I'm talking about.

Sex and money. This guy was pure. Without a Bible, without fellowship, without constant exhortation, without any internet to listen to messages.

We have so much. How did he come to this life? He had one quality. Which many Christians don't have.

He revered God. He feared God. There are two types of fear of God, you know, as I've mentioned that.

One is the fear that God may hurt me. I don't have that fear. The other is the fear that I may hurt God.

I want that fear. That's the right type of fear to have. Not that God may hurt me, but I may hurt God.

What type of fear do you want your children to have when they grow up? The fear that my dad may hurt me? Or the fear that I may hurt my dad? That's the type of fear God wants. He's a father. He wants us to be his children.

That's the type of fear Job had. He didn't know God as a father like we know. He knew God as God.

But he didn't want to hurt him. If he had wealth, he knew God gave it to him. And he was thankful for it.

And for such a good God who had blessed him with so much. He blessed him with ten healthy children and wealth and comfort and everything. He said, how can I hurt this God who has done so much for me? I don't want to hurt him.

And how did he know that without a Bible, without any commandment, you shall not commit adultery, or the New Testament standard, don't lust after women. How did this man know that lusting after a woman was wrong? When I'm sure everybody else in the world was doing it. That's what the fear of God does.

When you know God, he makes you sensitive in your conscience to things that are wrong, which other people around you don't think is wrong. Most people live by the standards of others around them. If they say it's wrong, it's wrong for me.

If they think it's not wrong, it's okay. But the man who fears God and reverences God, his conscience tells him things which other people don't even hear. And it doesn't matter if nobody in the world is following it.

He's determined to follow that. That's the blessed man. And we read in James, think of Job.

It says, consider Job, my brethren, is a New Testament commandment in James chapter 5. So that's why I want to consider Job. The Holy Spirit says, consider Job. Consider how he had not even 1% of what you have as Christians and see how he lived.

So don't make an excuse saying, my flesh is weak, my lusts are strong. What about him? He was also a child of Adam, just like us. It's a lie that we cannot overcome these things, especially if we seek the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can. You know how people say, I can't give up smoking, I'm so addicted to it, till one day the doctor says, one more cigarette and you'll die in a few days. He suddenly stops.

How did he suddenly get strength to overcome smoking? Because he feared death. It's amazing what all we'll do if you fear death. If you've got diabetes, however much you like ice cream, you'll stop it.

We fear love life so much that we will give up many things. We think we don't have the strength to give it up, but we have. How much more we can have if we seek for the power of the Holy Spirit? There is no commandment that God has given in scripture which cannot be obeyed.

I'm convinced about that. If you're not convinced about it, you'll never come there. When the Bible says, give thanks in everything because God controls everything to make it work for your good, it's possible.

No need to complain or murmur if you believe that God is making that evil that somebody did to you work for your good. So every commandment can be obeyed if you seek for it. It's a lie of the devil who keeps telling us, no, no, no, you can't keep it, etc.

So Job is a great example for me because he had so little and he lived such a pure life. But I want to go on from that, that this wonderful man, who was the greatest man of God on earth at that time, went through such unimaginable suffering that, I mean, people who read it say, this can't be true. They immediately say, no, this is a fancy story.

A fancy story? How does the Holy Spirit mention it in the book of James? It's not a parable. It was a real man because people can't believe that a real man could have suffered so much that in one day, through an accident and calamity, he lost all his property and all his children. All his wealth was burnt up.

Some enemies came and we read in Job 1 and verse 17 and made a raid and took them and slew the servants and took away all his wealth, all his cattle. Another fellow came and said, your children were all eating and drinking in their oldest brother's house. Verse 18, in a great wind, a storm, a tornado came and the house fell upon these young people and every one of them died.

Ten children, all died because they were all having a feast in the house and the tornado struck it and everybody died. And some Chaldeans came and raided and took away all his cattle. He gets all that news within a few seconds of each other.

Two servants come and say, Job, all your wealth is gone. And the other fellow comes later and says, all your children are gone. And it says in Job 1 verse 20, Job arose, he tore his robe.

That means he wept. Naturally, you'll weep when you lost your children. There's nothing wrong in weeping.

Sorrow is not a sin. Your loved one dies, you'll naturally weep. But along with his weeping, he did something else.

He bowed his head, fell down and worshipped God. That's the first person we read of in Scripture who worshipped God, Job. Abraham did it later.

But what I see there about worship is this, his attitude. You know, we think of worship as singing songs and all churches call Sunday morning praise and worship. It is not praise and worship.

It's praise and thanksgiving. Worship is something in an altogether different category. There are four steps in our relationship with God.

First is prayer, asking God. Second is thanksgiving, thanking God for what he's done. Third is praise, which is not thanking God, but praising him for who he is, even if he's done nothing for me.

And fourth is worship, which is the highest. Worship is not necessarily with words. It can be in silence.

It's more an attitude of the heart, where I bow down. You know, people who worship God always bow down. And that is saying, God, I accept your will for my life, whatever it is.

If you decide to give me something, I bow and I worship you. I'm sure Job worshipped when he got so much, his children and his property, and he bowed down and worshipped when God took them away. That's a little more difficult.

It's easy to bow down and worship when God gives you lovely children and gives you a good job and a good house and money. It's quite another thing to bow and worship God when he takes it away. The worshipper, true worshipper, does both, just as quickly and just as readily.

Otherwise, we're not a worshipper. You know, if I can only thank God when God gives me things, I'm like anybody else in the world. But I'm different if I can bow and worship God when he takes it away.

What I thought was mine, a worshipper says nothing is mine. And that's what Job says here in verse 21. When I came from my mother's womb, what did I have? How much money did I have? I didn't even have a stitch of clothing on my body when I came.

I came out naked. And one day I will leave this earth and they'll bury me. And there'll be no wallet in my pocket when I'm buried.

I won't be able to take my money with me. I won't be able to take my children. I came naked, I'll go naked.

And in the short period I'm on earth, God gives me things that I can enjoy, that I can use for his glory, that I can be a witness for him. I will accept whatever he sends. That's a worshipper for whom God is more important than everything.

And, you know, God later on blessed Job and gave him back his wealth and children. He had 10 children again and property. And it says in all these things, verse 22, he did not sin.

He did not blame God. Whenever a man blames God, he sins. Why did God allow this to me? That's a sin.

It's almost saying this God who runs the universe is stupid. He doesn't know what he's doing. That's what he's saying when he blames God.

Job didn't. He could say, I'm stupid. I don't understand why it's happening.

That's okay. Because I don't have the wisdom of God. You know, God's wisdom is so great.

I'll tell you, even though I've known Jesus for 57 years, there are many, many things I do not know of God's ways. I know a lot more than I did 57 years ago. It's like in the 12th grade, you know, a lot more than you were in the kindergarten, but I'm still growing a lot more about God.

I don't know because my mind is limited. It's like a cup. God's wisdom is like an ocean.

Is it surprising that the ocean doesn't fit into my cup? But my cup keeps expanding. That's the wonderful thing. As I get to know God, it becomes a little bigger.

It becomes like a bucket. But even the bucket can't contain the ocean. It becomes a tub, still can't contain the ocean.

It's growing, but there's so much of God that we still don't know. But we can grow. What is possible for you is to start your Christian life as a cup and remain a cup even after 30 years.

You don't know any more about God. There are lots of things I understand about God's ways today that I did not know even 10 years ago, and much more than I knew 50 years ago, because we are growing. So this is worship.

And the other thing I want you to see here is, we read there that after that, Satan said, boy, I couldn't get him. I'm going to prove this guy doesn't fear God. God, give me one more chance, this time to hit his body.

Because God, Satan says, I know one thing about human beings. They love themselves more than anybody else. They love themselves more than their children.

They love themselves more than their wives and husbands. But when it hits home, then they'll complain. God says, okay, try it.

And Satan goes and afflicts Job with a sickness. I don't know whether it was leprosy, because it says he had to go outside the city, and only lepers went outside the city. And he had to scrape himself and sit there.

Imagine all the sores in his body, and this man is the most godly man on earth. Well, you know what he says when he gets all that? His wife complains. How can you hold fast to your integrity, chapter 2, verse 9, when God treats you like this? And he said to her, you speak like a foolish woman.

If we accept good things from God, can't we accept adversity as well? In all this, Job did not sin. And there's something interesting that happened after this, and this is what I want to share here. There were three friends of his, verse 2, chapter 2, verse 11, called Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

They claimed to be friends, and for some time they pretended to be friends. They sat down with him on the ground for seven days, verse 13, and seven nights, and wept with him. But when you read the rest of the book from chapter 4 onwards, you find they were not real friends.

They criticized him left, right, and center. They claimed to know God. But I have a feeling, reading between the lines, that these three friends were jealous of Job.

You know, if you're a godly man, there can be people who are jealous of you, because your life seems to be so restful and peaceful, when their lives are full of turmoil. And listen to this. If you're a godly man, and on top of that, you have quite a bit of wealth, boy, then the jealousy increases like anything.

I mean, if you were godly, and you were living in a little hut or a shack, they'd be happy. Okay, I'm better off than him. The guy may be godly.

But if you're godly, and you're much better off financially than those guys, then the jealousy becomes intense. How in the world can he be godly, and he's got wealth too? And God allows certain circumstances

in the life of his servants that exposes the evil in others. It's one of the ways you see in scripture.

You know, the Pharisees had a lot of evil in them. But you read in the Gospels that sometimes it got exposed. The presence of Jesus got exposed.

For example, they had all this bitterness against a woman caught in adultery. Now, there was a law in the Old Testament that a woman caught in adultery must be punished. And they wanted to punish her, and they brought her to Jesus.

And remember, Jesus from heaven gave those laws to Moses in the Old Testament, so he could have kept it. But he said, whoever is without sin among you, throw the first stone at this woman. Go ahead.

Go ahead. You want to stone her? The one without sin can throw the first stone. And that's all Jesus said and kept quiet.

And you know what it says there in John chapter 8? The oldest Pharisee walked away first. And one by one they all left. Why didn't at least one of them pretend that he had no sin and take the stone? Because I know what would have happened.

They were scared of Jesus. They were afraid that Jesus would make a big list of all their sins publicly and expose them. They said, we better not.

We're scared of that. We better go away quietly. And they went away.

See, the evil in their heart got exposed when they came into the presence of Jesus. And that's sometimes the way God uses, you know, God allows some suffering to come to a godly man. Even today, just like Joe.

And immediately there are people who are Christians who say, Ah, that's because there must have been some secret sin in his life. They're a little delighted that that suffering came, which didn't come to them. And they find some delight in trying to show.

They were always jealous of this person who was far more spiritual than them. And they're so delighted now that something has happened to that person or to his family that didn't happen to them. And they gloat in that and say, Ah, there must be some secret sin in his life.

And thereby these hypocrites are exposed. What was in their heart hidden for so long. Their wrong attitude towards this godly man suddenly got exposed.

It's wonderful how God does it. And if that man wants, he can judge himself, but they don't usually judge themselves. They live in ignorance of their true condition.

So these people began to say like that, you know, I don't have time to read all of it. One of the things they said was, Job, have you ever met any godly man suffering? Tell me. And Job was living 2,000 years after Adam.

And you could point out, think of Noah, think of Enoch. Did they suffer? They walked with God. They had children.

They lived comfortably. They were godly men, Enoch and Noah. Job, did they suffer? No.

Why are you suffering? Something is wrong. There's some secret sin in your life. That's what they said to him.

And what about your children? One of them said in Job 8 and verse 4, Job 8 verse 4, maybe your sons have sinned against God. They don't know anything about his sons. Maybe your sons have sinned against God.

And therefore God has punished them for their transgression. So if you see God and say, okay, Lord, I'm sorry. Maybe God will have mercy on you.

So this is what these three people said. I've learned a lesson from that for myself. I read the scriptures not to judge other people.

There's a verse in Hebrews 10 which says, In the volume of the book it is written about me. You read that verse? It's a beautiful verse, Hebrews chapter 10. In the volume of the book it's written about me.

And so when I read the Bible, I see what's written there about me. Not about other people. And so I read about these people.

These people who are jealous of a godly man and immediately want to judge. Why did this happen to him? And I say, Lord, let me examine my heart. Do I ever have that attitude when I see another person suffering? Anybody.

I may not be a Christian. Maybe some friend of mine is suffering. Do I immediately feel, ah, there must be some sin in his life.

That shows what an evil person I am. Not how evil he is. It shows how far from God I am.

That I don't have the humility to say, I know only 10% of his life. 90% of his life I don't know. If his children suffer, how in the world can I say it's because they sinned? I don't know 90% of their life.

Does any teacher in a school correct the student's examination paper and after correcting 10% of it, give marks? No. If there are 10 questions, would a teacher correct just the first question and then give 0 or 100? No. We understand that.

But we do it all the time. We know 10% of a person's life and we formed a judgment. 0 or 100 or maybe 15 or 20.

That's how we are. Read the scripture to get light on yourself. And you'll get light even in a book like Job, which I think many people don't read.

I get light on myself from the wrong attitude of these critics of Job. Because such people live even today. The world is full of them.

People are quick to find fault, even in a husband and wife. You say you love your wife and you love your husband so much, but how quick we are to say, this must be why she did that or this must be why he did that. We are so far from God.

Remember that, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. I'll tell you what God said about them at the end. If you turn to the last chapter of Job, Job 42 and verse 7. The Lord said to these three people who had criticized Job,

saying, My anger is burning like a fire against three of you for daring to criticize my servant.

When you fellows are a million times worse than him. That's basically what he was saying. You have not spoken what is right about my servant.

This is my servant. God said, this is my servant, how dare you speak against him. I know everything about his life.

I know everything about his sons. I have allowed him to go through suffering so that he can be an example to people for the next 4,000 years. And he is today an example to me.

That's why God allowed Job to go through suffering. These guys didn't know that. They couldn't imagine that God is going to make this man a testimony and a blessing for 4,000 years for Jewish people and Christians and for all humanity.

They could only have the short-sighted view. He's suffering because there's some sin in his life. So they said, God said in the Old Testament, Christ had not yet died.

So there were sacrifices God commanded to symbolize that one day somebody would have to take the price for your sin. Why did God tell the Jews and all to kill a bullock or something? He was trying to teach them sin is very serious. Sin cuts you off from me just like you cut the wire and the electricity goes off.

It doesn't have to be a big gap. Just a small cut and it's gone. And so God says sin is very serious.

It cuts you off from me. And there must be a price paid for that sin because if you don't pay a price for sin, then the foundations of justice are destroyed. God is a just God.

And so a sinless person has to take the punishment for your sin. And Jesus was the one sinless person who would come and take the punishment for our sin finally. But in the Old Testament, they were told to look forward to it.

And symbolically, they had to take a bullock or a sheep that had not sinned. You know, animals don't sin. And put your hand on it and say, okay, I'm putting my hand on this bullock or sheep and this bullock or sheep is going to take the punishment for my sin.

Only a picture of one day how Christ would take all the punishment for all our sins. So God told Eliphaz, now go to Job, because he's the only upright man among all of you, and take seven bulls and rams and ask him to offer that as an offering. And then my servant Job will pray for you hypocrites.

And I will accept him and his prayer so that I don't deal with you according to your foolishness. That's what God calls all that opinion they had about Job. Your foolishness.

The way you criticize my servant, not knowing anything about his private life. You have not spoken about me what is right. Twice he says.

And these three people had to humble themselves and go to Job. Say, Job, we're sorry for the way we spoke against you. Please forgive us.

And God told us that you only can now pray for us. And offer this sacrifice. And Job said, sure.

He didn't have any grudge against us. That's another mark of a man of God. He doesn't say you guys deserve it.

No. We never speak like that. When we realize how much we ourselves have been forgiven by Jesus.

It is impossible for us to look at another person in a despising way. I can say that. By God's grace.

God's forgiven me so much that I can never look at another human being, however great a sinner he may be, and despise him. Impossible. I say impossible.

It wasn't like that with me many, many years ago. Those days I did not know or realize how much I had been forgiven. And then it was easy to despise others.

I'll tell you this little thing, a little law, that you can keep in your mind. If you despise any human being, even if a non-Christian sinner, evil man, it shows that you have not understood how much God has forgiven you. Or you have not seen the gravity and seriousness of sin.

How much you've been forgiven. People are evil. What they do is evil.

That's fine. But I say, this is what I say, I say, Lord, we all came from Adam. That poison of selfishness, of wanting to harm others, hurt others, criticize others, find fault with others, and justify myself, came down from Adam to every single one of us.

When God asked Adam, did you sin? He pointed at his wife. Lord, hang on, I'll tell you who's the cause of this. My wife.

You think that habit hasn't come down? It's come down in almost every family. My husband. I like, I wish somebody could paint a picture of Adam pointing his finger at his wife in the garden at evening.

I wish I could hang it up in every home. And say, this is how the human race started. Don't continue like that.

And I'd like to put another picture next to that of Jesus hanging on the cross, fingers pointing at nobody, saying, I'll take the blame. These two pictures are in my mind. One is what it means to follow Adam.

And the other is what it means to follow Jesus. I want to follow Jesus all the days of my life. I don't want to blame anybody, because I've been forgiven so much.

And because I've been forgiven so much, I'll forgive everyone. I'll walk this earth as a man who's been forgiven so much. Be like that.

It's made my life supremely happy. Because I'm not always looking for something to find fault with somebody, or some fault in something somebody did or said. I'll tell you, if you get rid of this habit, your life will be much happier.

One reason you can't rejoice in the Lord always is because you probably have the habit of finding fault wherever you go. You go into somebody's home and you find something wrong there. Everybody you meet, there's something wrong with them.

Except yourself, of course. This is a deception. So, we learn something from here, this story of Job, how he was misunderstood.

Are you misunderstood? The first book in the Bible, God wrote, saying the godliest man on earth was misunderstood by religious people. You must be willing to face that. And when it's all over, forgive them like Job did.

Bless them. Wish good for them. That is Christianity.

If you're not like that, just to say, I believe in Jesus, he died for me, he's coming back and on, it's a lot of rubbish. It's better you don't take the name of Jesus. I've sometimes said to people, listen, you should not bring disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ, the way you live.

You've got a Christian name. Everybody in your office thinks you're a Christian. But look at the way you behave.

It's better you change your name, so that at least the name of Jesus Christ is not dishonored. It's a terrible thing to be known as a Christian, and then to live just like anybody else in the world. Jesus said, you're the light of the world.

In other words, you know the difference between light and darkness. It's extreme. And when Jesus said, you're the light of the world, he was saying that your life must be so different from the people in the world.

Not just what you speak. Anybody can speak. The world is full of religious people who spew forth religious nonsense.

But life, Jesus said, your life must be like a light, not just the words we speak, that people see. You know, you see the light shining up there? It's not making any noise. I mean, Jew blacks, when they make a noise, there's something wrong with it.

It's burning, and you can't ignore it. It's there, but it's not saying anything. That's how Jesus said our life must be.

You don't even have to speak. Your life manifests something. The way you live and speak and what you live for shows something which, even if they don't say anything, they get convicted.

I remember when I was working in the Navy in India for many years, on the ships and in the naval base, I sought to be a Christian in the midst of my work and all my senior officers and everybody knew, my colleagues, that I was not just a run-of-the-mill Christian. I was one who had committed my life to Christ and I would be upright, and even if I was willing to suffer for it, I would tell my senior officer, I'm sorry, sir, I don't drink alcohol. I'm a Christian.

Sometimes they'd ask me to do something wrong and I'd say, I'm sorry, sir, my conscience doesn't permit me to do that because I'm a Christian. They knew me, and what is the result? I mean, I saw some of them converted, my colleagues, while I was in the Navy, but I remember somebody telling me, Zach, your commanding officer is in hospital with a brain tumor and he's dying. And he was remembering you because I was the only one who came across this path who reminded him of eternity.

Boy, was I thankful. I was recently in Bangalore at a retired naval officer's gathering and one of the admirals who had been my colleague in the Navy, he said, Zach, this is what, 40 years ago he had seen me. He said, Zach, I can never forget you, how you gave up everything for Jesus Christ.

I found, I didn't preach much to these people, but I found they couldn't forget. I remember another naval commander who I met in a bank once and he said, are you the guy who had Bible verses written on your scooter? He said, I remember that, 40 years earlier. It's not our words, and I'd never even preached to him.

I'd never even met him. Do you know that the way you live is making an impact on people around you who may never say a word to you, but when they approach death, they'll remember you as the one person who lived for Jesus Christ and showed them there was a life beyond the grave that you need to live for. We don't have to preach all this, and I didn't, you know, in the Navy, I couldn't, as an officer, go around preaching to others, but I could live the life that people saw I was different.

I wouldn't do anything wrong. I was very compassionate towards people who had made mistakes. Sailors would sometimes make a mistake and say, it's okay, forget it.

So, Job's life is the thing we are told to look back to, never mind if people misunderstand you, and particularly as a Christian, what does it mean to follow Jesus? Jesus is the greatest example. I mean, Job is a very poor example of a man who suffered, and he's excellent, but nothing compared to Christ. Because when we read in Isaiah 53, let me show you something about how it was with Jesus.

Isaiah 53 is a great chapter of Jesus' sufferings. It was a prophecy about how Jesus would come and suffer, written 700 years before he came. And it says here, the first thing it says is, he would grow up before his father, before God, like a tender shoot, like a root out of a parched ground.

This is the true Christian, who grows up before God. But in the eyes of the world, it says, Jesus did not have any form or majesty, even though he was king of kings, that people should be attracted to him. He was not like these handsome film stars, giving an aura of greatness.

No. All through his life. You know, it's interesting that the priests and soldiers who had seen Jesus for three and a half years, seen him so clearly, because he was a great miracle worker, when they wanted to capture him, to kill him, they said, we won't be able to recognize him.

So they had to get one of his disciples, Judas, say, will you, in the darkness, go and identify Jesus? Because he looks just like everybody else. There was no halo around his head, like you see in these paintings. No.

I want to tell you that. There was no halo there. They would have identified him easily then.

He was just like anybody else. That's a Roman Catholic thing that they put around Jesus' head. He was just like anybody else.

And that impresses me, that he lived on earth. His character was his light, not his height or his face or anything like that. And it says here, he was, as far as his appearance was concerned, there was nothing attractive.

Verse 2, his appearance was not one that we should be attracted to him. So, Jesus was not seeking to draw people with his appearance or his personality or by his life. And on top of that, it says he was despised and rejected by men.

Verse 3. Why was he despised? Even though he lived such a good life, because he exposed religious hypocrisy. That's why he was despised, by the religious people. Because he would come in there and show how they would pray such wonderful prayers in the church, in their synagogue, and then in their private life they'd squeeze money from the poor widows because the widow didn't pay rent last month or something like that.

He spoke about that in Matthew 23. And that really infuriated, because these are the church leaders who were collecting rent from poor widows and oppressing them when they couldn't pay. And Jesus came in and exposed all this hypocrisy.

He said, you guys just clean the outside of the cup, make it look nice, and the inside is full of muck. So, that infuriated them. And therefore he was despised and rejected.

They called him prince of devils and things like that. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Despised, Isaiah 53, and we did not esteem him.

And even when he hung on the cross, and people made fun of him, they did not realize that he was actually taking their sins. Those people who crucified him, he was taking their sins and he said to them, he said, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

They don't realize that I'm dying for their sins. These guys were crucifying me. Yeah, it was our grief that he took.

He was pierced for our transgressions. So, what I see there is, the way that Jesus has taught us to follow is not a way of, you know, what the world calls blessing and prosperity. It's a way of suffering and misunderstanding.

But a life in which when people misunderstand, we respond in love and goodness, because we know that this will work for my good. Do you know that when you, when somebody misunderstands you and speaks evil of you, if you react in the same way, you're going to be just as evil as him. Yeah.

And the devil has killed two birds with one stone. He made that guy evil towards you, and the devil didn't touch you. You reacted evil towards him, and the devil has killed two birds with one stone.

Why are we so foolish? Why should we say if somebody behaves in a bad way, I mean, silently the message that comes forth from me is, if you serve the devil, I'm going to serve the devil too. Isn't that stupid? If he hates me and I hate him in return, that's what you're saying. You serve the devil, I'm going to serve the devil too.

You yell at me, I'll yell at you. It's like saying, you serve the devil, I'll serve the devil too. It's foolish.

Jesus, you couldn't make Jesus do that. They cursed him and crucified him, and he said, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

His attitude was, you serve the devil, I'm going to serve God. This is the Jesus we follow. And if that's not the way you're living, my brother, sister, the devil's got plenty to accuse you to God.

You may carefully conceal your evils from other believers and get a reputation before them. But at that very moment, the devil is saying, God, look at that hypocrite. He goes to NCCF, not just any church.

But look at the way he lives. May the devil's mouth be shut. I've often felt, Lord, I want to be a person who shuts the mouth of the devil when he's got nothing to say against me before God.

I'm not saying that you never slip up. But if I slip up, I'm going to confess it immediately. The devil's mouth is shut.

Do you know that? I'm not saying that you live a life where you never slip up. That's impossible on this earth because we have a corrupt nature. But I see it's like if a thorn gets into your foot, what do you do? How long do you wait till you pull it out? That's how long you should wait before you confess your faults and your sins.

You don't even, even if you're doing the most important work, you'll stop that and pull out that thorn because it's so uncomfortable to have a thorn in your foot. When you're working, you're doing something. If something gets into your eye, how long do you take, dust gets into your eye, how long do you take before you get someone to blow it out or pour some water? We take care of our bodies so carefully.

You get a cut, immediately you want to put a mandate or something. That's what I'm saying. As long as we live on this earth, our soul will be affected in some way.

Immediately said it right. Confess it to Jesus. How wonderful we know that every sin has been dealt with on the cross.

When Jesus died, all I have to do is acknowledge my error. Say, Lord, I'm guilty. Don't be like Adam, blame somebody else.

You know those two thieves who hung on the cross? Both were murderers and thieves, the two sides of Jesus. Why did one go to heaven and the other go to hell? When both were equally evil. One single reason.

The thief on one side said, Lord, I'm guilty. The other fellow said, get me down from the cross. I don't deserve this punishment.

Maybe I deserve a couple of years in jail, but not crucifixion. Crucifixion is the worst of criminals. But the other guy said, I deserve this.

I am the worst of criminals. I don't deserve two years in jail. I deserve crucifixion.

If I were to paraphrase Jesus' words to him, he would say, really? You deserve this? Then you're fit for heaven. Because heaven is for those who will acknowledge their guilt. Not for perfect people, but for those who will humbly acknowledge their guilt.

Because I'm dying for such people. You will be in paradise with me today. What was the difference between these two? One acknowledged his guilt, unlike Adam who blamed somebody else.

He said, I'm guilty. I'm not blaming my parents that they brought me up badly. I'm not blaming Bat Company that led me astray.

I'm not blaming those other gangsters who took me into their gang. No, no, no, no, no. I'm blaming only myself.

I did not have to go and steal that money. I stole it. I can't say my fellow robbers encouraged me to do it.

No, no, it's me. I didn't have to go and kill that man. I killed him.

Not because I was a gang of murderers. Evil. I'm just an evil person.

But Lord, please remember me when you come into your kingdom. That's what he said. He didn't know it would take 2,000 years.

The Lord said, you don't have to wait 2,000 years. Today, you will enter my kingdom. You'll walk with me in paradise.

To me, this is the wonderful thing in heaven. The angels are surprised when Jesus walks with a forgiven sinner in paradise. That's going to be the joy we have when we meet him face-to-face one of these days.

But it will be for those who are absolutely honest, who are not here like Job's friends to criticize others and blame others, and say, Lord, I'm the one to blame. I take the blame for my sin. And who are not interested in judging other people.

The Bible says, Jesus said, Don't judge, lest you be judged yourself. Because in the measure in which you judge, you will also be judged. That's Matthew 7, verse 1. In other words, if I've been very hard in judging somebody for a sin, I tell you this, I might as well warn you right now.

God's going to be very hard in the way he judges you. I'll tell you something, a law that I found in scripture, God treats you like you treat other people. In India, we have maidservants who work in our homes.

And I've always felt, I must treat them, the servants who work, exactly like God treats me. With mercy. Do they make mistakes? Who's there who doesn't make mistakes? And when they make a mistake, let me not jump on them.

God doesn't jump on me when I make a mistake. He's so merciful to me. Not only that, even in our dealings among ourselves, as fellow believers, we make mistakes.

We accidentally hurt one another. Be merciful. It's one of the great, Jesus said, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Not everybody is going to obtain mercy from God. The merciful will obtain mercy. And let me read you another verse from James.

We read one about Job in the book of James. Here's another word from James. He says in chapter 2 and verse 13, Judgment will be without any mercy from God to those who have not shown mercy to other people.

I'll tell you something about the day of judgment that's coming. Every one of us will have to give an account of our life to God one day. And in that day, God is going to be merciful to some people.

You know who? Those who have been merciful to others. I want to be in that number. I've not been in that in previous unconverted days, but boy, since quite some years now in my life, I've decided I want mercy in the day of judgment.

And one way I can prepare for it is by being merciful to everyone I meet. And if I meet some godly man like Job today, who's suffering maybe in his body, maybe he got cancer, maybe his children are suffering, maybe he's suffering financially, I will not judge him. I will not act like God and say, I know why that happened.

I don't know why it happened. I want to get alongside him and help him and encourage him and bless him and see him through that trial. That's a godly man.

And if all of you like that, I'll tell you something. This church will be the body of Jesus Christ. Because that's how Jesus was.

He didn't come here to condemn people. He said very clearly in John 3, 17, God, I did not come to condemn people, but to save them. Some people have the habit of witnessing to others by giving out tracts.

Good. But after that, they say, okay, his blood is not on my hands. I've given him a gospel.

You've condemned him. Is that why you give the gospel to people? Just to say, hey, I'm not responsible for your soul. If you go to hell, I already warned you.

No. Jesus did not come with that attitude, and I don't want to go with that attitude. I want to save people.

I don't want to say, I gave you the gospel, now if you go to hell, it's your responsibility. No, I want to save them. Till the end of my life, I want to try my best to save them.

They don't get saved, okay, I feel sorry for them, but I'm not going to condemn them. That's God's business. There's so many things we can learn from the book of Job, of his attitude, and the attitude of these people who appear to be his friends, who had secret jealousy and wrong attitudes.

You know, there are two types of sins. One are sins of action, and the other sins of attitude. Sins of action are you slap somebody or you tell a lie.

Sins of attitude are jealousy, some bitterness, unforgiving spirit, and sins of attitude are a million times worse than sins of action. Very often what we confess is the sins of action. Oh Lord, I stole something there, I did something there.

Look for the sins of attitude towards other people. If you want to be a true Christian, deal with that first. Your attitude towards your husband and wife to begin with is their mercy, is their humility, is there a recognition that we are all, every one of us are part of a fallen race.

I don't despise non-Christians, no. I don't despise any human being. I say, Lord, I'm part of the same race, and I could have been like that.

I think of the worst terrorists and say, boy, I'm better than them. No, I'm not better than them. That guy came from Adam, and he had an upbringing which made him a terrorist.

If I had that upbringing, I'd have been a terrorist too. That's what I say. It's not because I'm basically better than him that he became a terrorist and I became a saint.

No, I had a better upbringing, so thank you, Lord. I was allowed to hear the gospel from childhood, and I could hear about Jesus and change my life from a very young age. I don't look down on others.

Here's another Christian. Maybe he didn't have the opportunities I had. Always be merciful, merciful, merciful, and recognize that God allows us to be misunderstood by others, even by religious people, and to suffer.

And when that happens, do what Job did. Forgive them and pray for them that they'll be blessed. And you'll be amazed how your spiritual life will not be like climbing a ladder.

It'll be like a rocket going up into space. And in a very short time, you'll become a spiritual person. And what you could not accomplish in many, many years can happen in a few days.

If you really pursue this path, say, Lord, my calling in life is to follow Jesus. Let people misunderstand me. Let people criticize me.

I will not defend myself. Many years ago, a very godly man told me three things. I was only 23 or so.

And he said to me, as a servant of the Lord, he knew I was going out of my job to serve the Lord. He said, remember three things. One, never tell your financial needs to any human being.

Tell it only to God. And I've done that. For 50 years, I've done it.

God's taken care of me. I've never had to tell my financial needs when we were very poor. When we were poor, my wife and I lived simply.

That's all. And we never bought things we could not afford. And secondly, he said to me, live very simply.

Don't live unnecessary expenditure on things you don't need. And also, I've tried to follow. And the third thing he said was very important.

He said, if people accuse you, keep quiet. Don't reply. Leave it to God to reply to them.

You know, like in the courts, there's an advocate who pleads your cause, right? And if you try to say something, you say, listen, I can handle your case. Just leave it to me. I have an advocate in heaven.

The Bible says Jesus Christ is our advocate. Leave it to him. He can handle things better than you.

When people accuse you, keep your mouth shut. Never mind. What is that guy's opinion worth anyway? I always say, man's opinion is fit for the trash can.

So, if 10,000 people call me a prophet, I don't become a prophet. Do you think you'll become a prophet if 10,000 people call you a prophet? If 10,000 people call me the devil, I don't become the devil. I decide myself what I'm going to be before God.

It's not what people call me or say about me. Recognize that. I often say that to myself.

If 10,000 people call me a prophet, I will not be a prophet. If 10,000 people call me the devil, I will not be the devil. It's I, God, who decides what I am and who I'm going to be, and I want to live before his face.

So, I hope you've been blessed from the life of Job, who's a great example for us, and an even greater example is Jesus himself. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, which gives us light on ourselves, first of all, on how we are to live on this earth.

In the few years that you give us, help us to please you, first of all, and to be a blessing to others in the measure in which we can. Help us to grow in this. Grow to please you and grow to be a blessing to others.

And above all, to be merciful to one and all. Fill us with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes our nature is so strong that we do things that displease you, but we want the power of your Holy Spirit to be able to please you in our lives.

We thank you, Lord Jesus. You're coming back soon, and we're looking forward to seeing you face to face. Thank you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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