

Your Life Example

by Daniel Punnose

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects one's Christian faith without the constant need to verbally declare it, focusing on the transformation of character by God's grace. It highlights the significance of producing good fruit as a Christian, aligning one's life with the truth of God's Word, and eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus. The message also addresses the critical aspect of believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus, urging listeners to research and understand the truth for themselves.

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, Galatians 5:22, 1 Thessalonians 1:8, John 14:3, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Acts 17:11, 1 Thessalonians 2:3, Proverbs 4:23, Romans 10:13, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Living Faith", "Transformation by Grace"

Description

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Transcript

Let me ask you a question. As a follower of Jesus, as a Christian, a believer, do I have to constantly tell people that I'm a Christian? Or, does my life and testimony and example and the way I behave tell people that I am different, I am a Christian? You know, if I find in my life that I'm constantly telling people I'm a Christian, I'm a Christian, I'm a Christian, then obviously I must have some fear that my life example is not enough. But Jesus said to us, he said, your life must be like a light that is on a hill for everyone to see.

Not that we have to be afraid of what people see in our life, but when God comes into our life and changes our character, then automatically our life will produce the kind of fruit that a Christian is supposed to produce. A coconut tree produces coconuts, a banana plant produces bananas, a pineapple plant produces pineapples. So also a Christian must produce good fruit according to what God says, and that is because God changes our character on the inside.

But if we find that our life, we struggle, and we have to constantly tell our friends I'm a Christian, tell these people I'm a Christian, because our life is struggling, then we need to ask God for help to change our character so that our life can also be a testimony. When Paul came to the Thessalonian believers, he

appreciated them and writes to them because their life is a genuine testimony, not only in their hometown, but everywhere in different parts of Asia. As we continue this study today, let us ask the Lord first to help us to understand so that we can apply and we can see life change.

Father, we thank you for your grace. We thank you for your mercy. We thank you that you are so compassionate and you help us.

We pray that as we study this passage today in the letter of 1 Thessalonians, that you would help us to live these principles in our life so that we can have the kind of testimony that you desire. In Jesus name, Amen. These Thessalonian believers, it says in chapter 1, it says, The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Asia, but your faith in God has become known everywhere.

Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it. Verse 9, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave to us. They tell us how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescued us from the coming wrath.

Paul tells us that these believers, their life, their testimony was such a life that people begin to talk about them and tell about their stories and tell them about their faith. And it encouraged so many people. One of the things these Thessalonian believers that Paul appreciated them about is that they understood the truth and they changed their life according to the truth.

He said that Paul says that they understood what was false and they understood what was true and they changed their life from the false to the truth. You know, I remember hearing Dr. Ravi Zachariah, who is one of the greatest Christian apologists of our time. Very smart, very able, capable man, wonderful language.

Any of his books are wonderful to read. I would encourage you to listen to his messages, get his books, and you will understand many principles that he takes that are very difficult to explain, but makes them very simple for us to understand. One of the things he said when someone asked him, what is the greatest challenge that you face these days? Dr. Ravi Zachariah travels all around the world, speaks in universities.

Very high level conferences. And this is what he said. He said, one of the greatest difficulties that I face is when I present an airtight case for the Christ in Christianity and why it is the truth, the worldview that people must see as the truth.

Young people will come to him and say this, Dr. Zachariah, I understand what you say. I actually believe what you say. I know it is the truth, but I don't want to do it.

I don't want to live and change my life. And Dr. Ravi Zachariah said, this is a change in people's thinking. This is something that has never been there before.

It used to be that because of science and because of some of the other areas of studies that people understood that if you discover something to be false and something to be true, then you change your life according to the truth. For example, think about this. What if a doctor said, yes, I know what is true, but I don't want to do it.

What if he said, I know how to treat cancer, but I don't want to do it that way. I want to do it in my way. So many people would die.

So many people would get hurt. Very often, you know, we drive the vehicles and this is something that husbands do very, very often. They drive the vehicles and they get lost.

But husbands don't like to ask directions. We only want to do it in our way. And so we get lost and we get more lost and more lost.

And finally, when we get so lost, then only we ask for help. When we are presented with the truth, we have two choices. One, we can accept the truth or second, we can disregard the truth.

The best thing we can do is look at what is actually true. Do I actually believe what is true or am I believing what is false? You know, there are many people in history, very famous people, very intellectual people, very, very smart people, smarter than me, who when they came across the teachings of Christ or the resurrection of Christ, which Paul mentions here, he appreciates these Thessalonian believers because they wait for the return of Christ. But he says also because God has raised Jesus from the dead.

Many of these intelligent, intellectual people, they question Christianity. They question the resurrection of Christ and they question the truth of Jesus claims. But these people did something which I appreciate, even though they did not like what Jesus said, even though they did not believe immediately the resurrection of Christ and the truths of God's claims.

You know what they did? They researched, they read, they studied. They wanted to find out if this is the truth or not the truth. They did not simply blindly say, I don't believe it.

They researched themselves. And you know what happened? People like Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, Rabbi Zacharias, C.S. Lewis, these great giants in intellectual understanding. These men found the truth and they said, if this is the truth and this is where my life is, then my life must match the truth.

I must understand what is right. And I must associate my life with what is right. You know, it's like someone saying, I don't like gravity.

I don't like gravity. I want to do my own thing. So they go to the top of the building and they jump off the building and say, I don't like gravity.

They still will hit the ground. Just because you don't like the truth doesn't mean that it is nullified. It will always be the truth.

I want to present to you a few thoughts for you to think about. Paul tells these barian believers a couple of things. One, they turned from the false and embraced the truth.

My brother, my sister, truth is the way that your life moves forward. In school, we understand this. When the teacher is teaching us mathematics, we must embrace the formulas and the proofs that help us to come to the right conclusion.

Otherwise, if we believe one plus one is three, it doesn't work. We'll lose money. We won't be able to count.

We won't be able to do basic business principles. But because we know the truth, absolute truth, one plus one is two, then we understand that is truth. I must change my understanding.

And he appreciates these believers because it says, they turned from what was false and they believed what was true. And then he also tells them that he appreciates them because they wait for the Son from heaven, whom God has raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescued us from the coming wrath. Specifically, Paul is talking about the future events that Jesus will come back again to take his church, to take those who believe in him, who have a relationship with him, and they will be resurrected.

But there's a couple of things in here that he mentions. One is about that God raised Jesus from the dead. There are some people, and I know them, and I've talked to them before, that don't believe that Jesus really died on the cross and Jesus did not rise from the grave.

See, if you want to destroy Christianity, disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and you will have destroyed Christianity. Because as believers, our faith and hope is in a risen Lord. In a risen Lord, not a dead Jesus, but a live Jesus.

One that God has raised from the dead, who has conquered sin and death, therefore giving us the hope that we also will live even after death. This is why believers don't fear death, because we have a hope even after death. But there's a couple of things that people have always said and accused Jesus of not really dying on the cross or not really rising again.

So briefly, I want to share with you a couple of thoughts, and then I would encourage you to maybe read some really good books that would help you understand the resurrection, maybe a little bit more, and research it for yourself. Paul, in Acts chapter 17, 16, 17, 18, he appreciates these believers for researching the scriptures for themselves, not blindly jumping into something, but thinking through them very carefully. I want to give you three very, very common arguments why people don't believe that Jesus died on the cross.

And I want to give you three proofs that Jesus did die on the cross and that Jesus did rise again. Number one, people often say that Jesus was not actually crucified. It was someone else.

Now, if you go through the gospels, you will find that there were many, many other religious people who were very angry with Jesus. They wanted Jesus to die. They did not like that many people followed Jesus.

They did not like that Jesus said very difficult things. So when Jesus was brought before the king and brought before the magistrate and the pilot and all these people, they were sure that this is Jesus who they wanted to see crucified. The soldiers that brought Jesus to the place and crucified him.

It says that people stood there and mocked Jesus. They said, if you're the one who did all these miracles, come down from the cross, save yourself. Jesus was the one who died on the cross because there were witnesses around there who insulted Jesus right in front of him.

Please keep in mind when crucifixion took place, it was not crucifying way, way up so high. It was actually near to the ground. People could see and mock and spit.

And they did all those things to Jesus. And so Jesus definitely did die. He's the one who died on the cross.

But also some people think that maybe he didn't really die on the cross. Maybe he was just crucified, but then he only went unconscious because lack of blood. And then they put him in the tomb and the cool air in the tomb revived him.

And then he came out. There's a couple of problems with this. One, Romans were experts in killing.

That was their expertise. Crucifixion was a very common thing. And these Roman soldiers were experts in death.

They knew how to kill and they knew when someone had died. In fact, we read that Jesus while hanging on the cross, it says that he gave up his spirit. He said, father, it is finished.

Crucifixion is a horrible way to die. You are suspended by your arms and you have a small piece of place to stand on with your legs. And you basically have to pull yourself up to breathe.

And then you have to put yourself down and breathe continuously. And people would sometimes for days suffer. Crucifixion was not meant to kill you quickly.

It was meant to kill you slowly. That's why people feared crucifixion. Crucifixion was only reserved for the worst criminals.

And so Jesus is crucified. He's there. There was a question after Jesus said it is finished and he died.

Someone asked, is he really dead? Let's make sure. They took a spear. They took a spear and put it into his side and pierced his heart.

It says that blood and water flowed. That means he had been dead. And the blood and some of the other elements had separated.

Also the sack around his heart, which contains the heart, had been pierced and blood and water flowed. These men, these expert killers knew how to kill and make sure that someone had been dead. They did not break Jesus' legs.

According to the scriptures and the promises and the prophecies that none of his bones would be broken. But it was very common. In fact, they went to go break the other legs of the men who were crucified on the left and right of Jesus.

Because when you break the legs, you cannot stand any longer and you cannot pull yourself up and you suffocate and you die. But instead, they saw that Jesus was dead and they wanted to make sure. So they pierced him in his side and then blood and water flowed, piercing his heart.

And they knew he had 100% had died. And so just thinking that Jesus had gone unconscious would not work because they pierced his heart. There's no way for Jesus to survive.

Then after asking for the body of Jesus, some of the women and some of the other people wrapped Jesus' body according to the Jewish customs, putting the spices and putting some of the other elements in there and put Jesus in a tomb, a cutout cave in a rock and rolled a huge stone in front of it. Now, some people think that maybe Jesus didn't die. He was only unconscious.

And then the cool air of the tomb revived him and he came out. I have seen what they believe to be the tomb of Jesus. It's just near Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified, the place of the skull.

It's in Israel. And this tomb is cut into a rock. A huge round cylinder rock is rolled in front of the entrance.

It could take up to 12 people to move that stone, such a heavy, heavy stone. In that cool cave, which some people believe that Jesus revived, being inside there with a loss of blood, not eating or drinking for three days, then moving that stone, which could take up to 12 people to move by himself and then walking all the way, miles and miles and miles. Also, there were soldiers guarding the tomb, which Jesus would have to somehow bypass them to reach Galilee, is an impossible thing.

Some people thought that maybe the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus. Actually, that theory was started with the soldiers who reported that Jesus had rose again. And the official said, just say that the disciples stole the body.

So that rumor was actually started in Jesus' time by the officials as a lie to cover up the conspiracy that they had created. And so here the idea that the disciples had stolen the body is completely false because, first of all, the disciples all ran away. When the soldiers came into the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus in the Gospels, it says that they all got scared and ran away.

Only John, the beloved disciples, with Mary, Jesus' mother, at the cross. Everyone else had run away. I don't think these disciples being that frightened would be having enough courage to try to defeat a whole guard in front of the tomb.

There could have been up to eight or 16 soldiers trained, ready to kill anyone who came to the tomb. And here these disciples would not be brave enough. Even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they were scared.

They were hiding inside the room when Jesus appeared to them. My encouragement for you is to look at and research for yourself whether Jesus actually died and rose again or not. The only possible conclusion is, yes, that Jesus died.

Yes, that Jesus was buried. And yes, that Jesus rose again. And Paul tells these believers, he says, I appreciate you because you wait faithfully for the return of Jesus, whom God has raised from the dead and who will be coming back again to take us with him.

My brother, my sister, when Jesus rose from the grave, he conquered sin and death. You know what that means? That means Jesus is powerful. Jesus can forgive our sins.

But here's the thing, if that is the truth, and it is the truth, then I must see if my life matches that. If you have never asked Jesus to come into your life, to forgive your sins, to bring that relationship back to the father that was lost. If you have never done that, my challenge for you is to do what the Bible says.

It says that if we call upon the Lord, he will hear us. If we repent of our sins, change our ways, live according to God's word, then our life will be lived according to the truth. Get some of Rabbi Zachariah's books.

Get C.S. Lewis' book, Mere Christianity. Get Josh McDowell's book, More Than a Carpenter, and you will discover some of the greatest understandings of who Jesus is and the uniqueness of Christ. Paul

continues in chapter two, talking to these Thessalonian believers.

He says, you know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. Paul was only able to be with him for three weeks, such a short time. It was almost a sad occasion, three weeks and Paul had to run away.

He says, but it was not a failure, even this very short time. He says, we had previously suffered and had been insulted in Philippi. You read that in Acts chapter 16.

As you know, but with the help of our God, we dare to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. For the appeal we made makes does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

Paul tells them, we were able to only spend a short time with you, but we did not try to deceive you. We did not try to trick you. We did not try to simply motivate you to do something, but we presented the truth to you and we showed you our life, our testimony.

My brother, my sister, one of the things you want to be very careful of, you want to be careful of people who try to manipulate you. People who try to butter you up, try to say nice things to you, to try to get you to do something. Stay away from manipulative people.

Paul tells these believers, he says, we did not try to deceive you. In fact, we were very open with you. We were very honest with you.

You saw our life and our testimony. My challenge for you is that you should question and see if your life is that kind of testimony. Be careful of people who try to manipulate you.

Be careful of people who try to get you to do things by manipulation. May the Lord bless you and help you. May he watch over you and give you wisdom and understanding and may you guard your heart with the promises of God's word.

Let us pray together. Father, we thank you for your grace and your mercy. We ask that you would take these truths that we've learned and that you would help us to hide them deep into our hearts.

That as we go on with our life day to day at school and at the workplace, at home, in the village, in the city, that our life would be a testimony. That we would not have to tell everyone always that we are a Christian, but our life would be different and they would ask us why we are different. Then we tell them it's because of Jesus.

Lord, we just ask that you would bring great assurance to our hearts, knowing that Jesus not only died for our sins, but he rose again to give us hope for this life even after death. I pray that you bless each of my brothers and sisters in Jesus name. Amen.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to study God's word and see your life being changed day to day and for the best.

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