

Eternal Values - Demonstrating Heaven's Values

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living as Jesus lived and following His example, and warns against the dangers of backsliding and worldliness.

Duration: 52:30

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 22:39, John 10:27, Acts 20:27, 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 John 2:27, Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Eternity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of aligning our values with those of heaven, particularly in relation to money. He highlights the need to fight the good fight of faith and take hold of eternal life, as mentioned in 1 Timothy 6. The speaker also emphasizes that the life of God cannot be organized or predicted, comparing it to the work of the Holy Spirit, which is like the wind. The sermon encourages listeners to seek a deep understanding of eternal life and to be mouthpieces of God, focusing on the message of the heart rather than impressing others with worldly greatness. The speaker urges listeners to follow the example of Jesus in preaching and to study His teachings as a guide.

Transcript

We know that it's easy for a Christian to backslide. We have seen so many examples around us, and we have seen how easy that is in our own life as well, if we are honest. If we read the letters of the Lord to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, only two of the churches and their leaders, it was actually to the leaders of the churches, had not backslidden, and that was in the first century.

You know, people speak about the first century church, but the first century church in Revelation is in a pretty pathetic state. What started out so well on the day of Pentecost, in those immediate years after the day of Pentecost, came to a very sad state of affairs by the time of the end of the first century, when John the Apostle was writing to them. And the significant thing there, which I have often mentioned, is that the message to the leader is the message to the church, because the church has become like the leader.

And this is a fact, whether we like it or not, we have to face. If you have a godly, humble man as the leader and shepherd of a church or a movement, it will produce godly, humble people who follow in that way. If you have a man who loves money and who loves honor, and for whom the Christian ministry is a profession rather than a calling, it will produce people also like that, for whom the Christian ministry is a

profession or a calling.

And that's what we learn from those letters to the seven churches. It's easy for a leader to backslide. And when a leader backslides, the church backslides, the movement backslides, the organization backslides.

And the sad thing is, there may not be anybody around to rebuke the leader, to correct the leader. In those days, there was at least one John who could hear what the Lord was saying and who had a care for the leaders of these churches to tell them. They were called the messengers of the churches.

The Lord said to John, write to the messenger of the church in Ephesus, you have left your first love. Write to the messenger of the church in Sardis, you have a name that you are alive but you are dead. Write to the messenger of the church in Thyatira, you are allowing your false prophetess to lead people astray in that church.

Write to the messenger of the church in Laodicea, you are lukewarm. I wish you were cold out in the world rather than lukewarm. And John wrote that.

John wrote a letter to all those people saying, this is what the Lord thinks of you. If we have a brother like that to tell us, we are extremely fortunate. But that's not easy to find nowadays.

And so it's because such people who will tell us the truth about our spiritual condition are rare, it's easy for a leader to backslide. Please remember that in all the rebukes that the Lord gave to the five churches there, never once does he say, you are not evangelizing enough, your outreach programs are not as much as they should be, you are not active enough in my work, in fact in some places he says you are very active, but you have left your first love. In all those cases, his rebukes were to their character, and not aimed at their activity.

And that's a lesson we must remember because that's where we drift. And sometimes we can drift in our character and substitute activity for that drift, and we have a bad conscience, and we try to cover up that bad conscience by more work, and that's not the answer. So I turn to 2 Corinthians 11 to look at a verse which tells us, when can we say that we have gone astray, or we are beginning to go astray, because if we detect our going astray at the beginning itself, then there is great hope that we don't discover it years later, and there is no apostle like John around to write us a strong letter rebuking us, and we say we are messengers to the churches, you know those churches I mentioned in Revelation, they were messengers to the churches, they were always occupied with sharing the word, sharing the word, Lord what is the word for your people this Sunday, and what is the word for your people this Wednesday, and then sit down with their books, or whatever they had those days on Saturdays to prepare the message for Sundays, and in all of that they could not hear what was the Lord's word to their own heart.

They were the messengers to the churches, but they couldn't hear what the Lord was saying to them, and why couldn't they hear what the Lord was saying to them? They were not living under the Old Testament, in the Old Testament you could not hear what the Lord was saying to you, you had to go to a prophet, even the kings had to go to Elisha or somebody and say please find out what the Lord is saying, and Elisha would say wait 2-3 days, or even Zedekiah the king would go to Jeremiah, and say what is the Lord saying, and Jeremiah said wait I will tell you, and after 3 days he would tell him, but that was Old Testament, now in the New Testament it says they shall not teach every man their neighbor, saying know the Lord, Hebrews 8, 10 and 11, but they shall all know me. So those messengers of the churches, if they could hear the Lord's message for other people, why couldn't they hear it for themselves? Please

remember this brothers and sisters, it is easier to hear what the Lord has to say to other people, than to hear what the Lord has to say to us. But if I don't hear what the Lord has to say to me, first of all, what I say to others will gradually lead me to the place where I am a professional preacher, and God hasn't called us to be professional preachers, He has called us to be His mouthpieces, and we must first hear what the Lord has to say to us.

So I think of this verse in 2 Corinthians 11 and verse 3, Paul says I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness. There are two things that the serpent does, one is persecute us, the other is deceive us. If we read in Revelation 13, that the serpent, anyway some chapter 11 or chapter 12 or 13 I don't remember, the serpent persecuted the dragon, sent a flood of water, persecuted the woman, and sent a flood of water after her, and then persecuted those who were her seed, the seed of the woman who held to the testimony of Jesus, and obeyed the commandments of God.

There we read of the serpent persecuting, but in the beginning of the Bible we read of the serpent deceiving, and I feel it is more dangerous when the serpent deceives. Persecution has never in any country, in any generation, led the church to backsliding. Persecution has always purified the church.

For many many years I have preached and I have believed, that one day, the Lord will allow in India, an anti-Christian government. I preached that 20 years ago, and I said, I believe that, I don't know when, but I believe that the Lord knows, a time is going to come when, the church in India has to be purified, and that purification will not come merely through, conventions and messages and preaching. We respond very lazily, to such ministries, but the Lord will do a quick work, by permitting persecution, and suffering for His people, and if we hear what the Lord is saying in this time, I believe we need to prepare our people in our churches, to be faithful in the time of persecution, to be faithful to the name of Jesus.

In some places where you work that is already happening, but in many other parts of India we don't have that persecution yet, but it will come, it will begin, there is no doubt about it, and in that day, if we have not prepared our people, then they will not be able to stand, then we would have failed in our responsibility. We must not live as people who are just thinking of today, our calling is to prepare people for tomorrow, for the future, and for that we have to listen to what the Lord is saying. So the serpent deceives, and he says, I am afraid that your mind should be led astray, and here is where we find that expression, led astray, from simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

There are some lovely words there, simplicity, purity, devotion to Jesus Christ. There is a lot of difference, dear brothers, from being devoted to Christ, and devoted to his work. There is a lot of difference.

It is like a wife who is devoted to her husband, and who is devoted to her home, and who may not have much interest in her husband, but she does a first class job as a homemaker. I don't think any husband would be happy with such a wife. Yes, a wife must be devoted to making a home, but it must be next to being devoted to her husband.

It must flow from her devotion to her husband. When, for myself, what I see from this verse, is that when my devotion to Jesus Christ, to the person of Christ, begins to come down, I have already started being led astray by the serpent. And if you will keep that as a standard in your life, I believe it will help you.

However active you may be, however blessed your work may be, when in your personal life, your devotion to Jesus Christ, the fervent love that you had for Christ once upon a time, when probably you did not do much in terms of activity, when that fervent love has gone, and your relationship with the Lord is not one of

love and devotion, because you are so busy, you have so many things to do. I want to say to you, please remember, the serpent has already led you astray. Not into sin, you may have a good life and a good testimony, but when the serpent suggested something to Eve, he did not tell her to slap her husband, or kick him, or kill him, or speak rudely to him.

Those things would have been obvious sin. He told her something which looked so innocent. What is wrong, he says, in knowing the difference between good and evil? You tell me, brothers and sisters, what is wrong in knowing the difference between good and evil? I am not asking you to do evil.

I am just asking you to know the difference between good and evil. Isn't that a good thing? Take from this tree which will tell you the difference between good and evil. And Eve said, yeah, that sounds reasonable.

You know, it doesn't look as if it is anything wrong. That is how he led her astray. He does not lead us into obvious sin, but to something less than God's highest, something which our reason may say is all right, but our spirit is still uneasy.

Have you ever found situations like that, where you use your reason, and reason says, yeah, there is nothing wrong with that, and yet when you consider doing it, your spirit says no. And you can't find any reason why you can't do it. I want to encourage you in such moments, listen to your spirit.

Don't listen to your reason. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and don't lean on your understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Go by what your heart says, and don't lean on your understanding. And it says in Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6, He will direct your paths. In all your ways, acknowledge Him.

How do you acknowledge Him? By listening to what your heart says, not by listening to what your reason says. That's how the serpent led Eve astray. And so we can be occupied with something which is good, Christian work, and our devotion to Jesus is gone.

So, in order to preserve our devotion to Jesus, just like a young girl who is engaged or in love with some young man whom she has met, and she wants to know everything about that man, about his interests, and how he spends his time, and what he lives for, and all about his life, and all about his history. I believe that if we are devoted to Jesus, we will want to know Him better. Everything about Him.

I want to encourage you to make the study of the life of Jesus on earth your passion. Because the Bible says, we must follow the example of Him. He gave us an example that we must follow in His steps, Peter says.

You know the apostles were taken up with this. Thirty years after the day of Pentecost, Peter writes in 1 Peter 2, verse 21, Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, and like we were considering yesterday evening, and in whose mouth no lie was found. In His mouth never was a lie found.

And it says here, follow His example, who when He was reviled did not revile in return, and so on. So we read here that Peter says, Jesus Christ has left us an example for us to follow in His steps. I need to discover what those steps are.

John, writing in 1 John 2, 60 years after the day of Pentecost, writes like this, 1 John 2, verse 6, The one who says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same manner as He walked. Or as the living Bible puts it, anyone who says he is a Christian, should live as Jesus lived. And I want to say this, that for myself, this has been, I would say the greatest passion of my own life, to live as Jesus lived.

And my service for the Lord, whatever I do is secondary. It has to flow out from a passion to live as Jesus lived. And when we seek to live as Jesus lived, we are not going to sit in a monastery, just praying, because Jesus did not live in a monastery praying.

He was not in a monastery even for one day. He spent thirty years in a home, and working in a carpentry shop, and then He spent three and a half years in such active ministry, sometimes not finding enough time to eat, not finding enough time to sleep, sometimes praying all night, traveling one hundred miles, sometimes to help one needy soul. To live as Jesus lived is going to be a very active life.

It is not going to be just sitting alone in the room and praying and studying the Bible. Far from it. It is going to be a blessing to people.

It is going to be a life where we may not have time enough to eat or sleep, but we will spend our earthly days being a blessing. So, don't think that when we seek to understand how to live as Jesus lived, that we will have no ministry. That is impossible.

We will have a more effective ministry than we have right now. Can you have more effective ministry than Jesus Himself had? So, if our passion is to live as Jesus lived, to find that right balance between devotion to the Father which He had and service to people, we will be all right. But when that devotion to Jesus is gone, then our ministry becomes just an activity.

It becomes a dead work. And when I look at the life of Jesus who was the light of the world and who calls us to be the light of the world, I find one thing. There are many, many things that we could talk about, but one thing I thought of which I wanted to share this morning was He demonstrated by His life what heaven's values were.

Think of that. Is your life demonstrating what heaven's values are? That's the challenge that comes to me in my relationship with people, in the way I deal with money. Am I demonstrating what heaven's values are? For example, you know this statement that Paul made to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 6. He uses an expression in verse 12.

Fight the good fight of faith and take hold of eternal life to which you were called. You know, we have a mind which thinks very logically. 2 plus 2 is 4, 3 plus 3 is 6. And, you know, organized, systematic way of thinking.

But the life of God is not something we can organize. The work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said the work of the Holy Spirit is like the wind. You can't put the wind inside a box.

You can't predict where it will blow tomorrow, where it is going to go. You can't say anything. He says everyone really led by the Spirit, born of the Spirit, will be like that.

So, eternal life also, many Christians have thought of it like this. I accept Jesus Christ and I've got eternal life. I've got it.

Now it's there. Now it's there forever. Then what does this verse mean? Take hold of eternal life? What is eternal life? The best definition is the one Jesus himself gave in John 17 verse 3. This is eternal life, he said.

Not that they might live forever. Even people who go to hell live forever. This is eternal life that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

So what is eternal life? Let us get rid of our old concepts of eternal life and take the definition which Jesus gave. Eternal life is to know God. Eternal life is to know Jesus Christ personally.

To know more what his values are. And Paul says to Timothy, get a hold of that. Get a hold of the values which Jesus had in his life and take hold of it and fight the fight of faith to renounce everything else you are holding on to and take hold of eternal life.

You see, I can't take hold of eternal life if I don't fight the good fight because there are so many other things in the world that are tempting me to live hold of them. Do you think if the devil could tempt even Jesus Christ with the glory of this world, saying, I will give you all the glory of this world if you will bow down to me, you think he won't tempt us with that? You think I am such a great spiritual man that the devil cannot tempt me anymore with the glory of the world? The one who thinks like that is going to be deceived by the devil into the glory of the world. I want to say, my brothers and sisters, till the end of our earthly lives we will be tempted by the world.

It's not only when we are babies that we are tempted by the world, spiritual babies. Have you noticed this? In 1 John chapter 2, I don't know whether you have noticed the connection here, I just want to show you something. 1 John 2, verse 12, I am writing to you little children, that is, spiritual babes.

Verse 13, I am writing to you fathers, those who are spiritually mature. In the middle of verse 13, I am writing to you young men, those who are neither babies nor fathers, who are in between. Again, the last part of verse 13, I am writing to you children, those who are small.

I am writing to you fathers, verse 14, in the middle of verse 14, young men. He writes to three groups of people, those who are just beginning their Christian life, who are babes, those who have grown up a little, and those who are mature fathers. And to all three of them, what does he say? Verse 15, Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world.

Fathers? Is it only for children? I am writing to you fathers. Don't love the world. Is there ever going to come a time in our life, where we are not going to be tempted by the things of the world, by the values of this world? Never.

I will tell you what I have seen in these last 39 years. I have seen people who, in their first years after they were converted, when they were radically converted and became disciples, they really didn't love the world. They forsook everything.

And they wanted to live for Jesus, detached from all the sense of world's values. And I have observed some of these people, many of these people, as they have grown on, they have gone on to, in terms of activity and work, doing bigger things for the Lord, but in terms of the world, they have become more worldly. That initial sense of detachment from the things of the world is gone.

It should have been, they should have been more detached when they were 50 than when they were 20. But they are not. They are more attached to the world when they were 50.

They were far better off when they were 20. Isn't that sad? Why? Because their devotion to Christ is gone. They did not make their life's passion to study how Jesus lived.

They started like that, and they were gripped by that when they were in their early 20s. But as time went on, they did not have good role models in front of them. They looked at other Christian leaders who were living comfortable lives, and they said, Yeah, one day, if I am faithful, I will no longer be struggling.

I will also live a comfortable life. And finally they achieved it. Achieved what? They went down, like all those other examples they had in front of them, went down.

And so Peter says, Jesus has given you an example. He went down. Till his last day on earth, he lived in simplicity, detached from the things of the world, nothing on earth, no comfort, no ease had any attraction for him.

The devil told him, I am sure he told him many, many times, I will give you everything this world offers, if you bow down to me a little bit. And from that, I learned something. I can get the things of the world, the honor and the glory of this world, only by bowing the knee to Satan somewhere in my life.

Others may not know it, but it is very easy, dear brothers and sisters, for us to bow the knee to Satan, to just compromise a little bit somewhere, to have the world's sense of values, because this is a mental thing. It's not something, I don't change the color of my shirt when I become worldly. I mean, that may be a much later stage.

But it begins as a mental thing. You know, the world is in our mind. And that is very clearly proved in Romans 12 too.

Do not be conformed to the world. What's the rest of that verse? But be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So, where is the world? Where is the conformity to the world? In the mind.

Where is the transformation into the likeness of Christ? In the mind. The mind, think like the world thinks, but be transformed to think like Jesus thinks. In Colossians 1 and verse 9, it says here, we pray for you, in the last part of verse 9, that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

You know, it's very interesting when you read through Paul's letters and you see the things he prayed for people. This is one of those examples. Many times in the episodes, if you want a good Bible study, you could study through the prayers of the Apostle Paul to Romans, Philippians, Colossians.

See, what does he pray for? Many of these people were extremely poor and he never once prays that they'll be materially rich. He never even prays that they will escape persecution. He's always praying some spiritual thing for them, that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit or have an understanding of God's will or become perfect in Christ.

These were the type of things he prays for. So different from the prayers of many Christians and the prayers of many Christian leaders for their congregations. And here's one of the things he says, I pray that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

That is a paraphrase of the New Testament written by a man called J.B. Phillips. And in one of the earlier versions of that paraphrase, that was also revised, but one of the earlier versions, which it said like this, this verse is paraphrased like this, that you may look at things from God's viewpoint. I pray that you may see things or look at things from God's viewpoint.

That's a wonderful thing. That's what it means. To understand His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding means to be able to see things from God's viewpoint.

That is the great need if you are to be a true servant of God, to look into a situation, to look into people the way God is looking at that. Then you'll be able to find a solution to it. And so, the honor of this world, I was talking about that.

Let me turn back to 1 Timothy 6. Fight the good fight of faith, take hold of eternal life. Verse 13, 1 Timothy 6.13, I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate. What was that good confession before Pontius Pilate, which was such an important confession that Paul quotes it to Timothy? That confession is found in John chapter 18 and verse 36.

Jesus answered Pilate and said to him, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting. As we look at the life of Jesus, we find that His whole life He demonstrated that His kingdom was not of this world.

And that's what many of the disciples couldn't understand. They wondered why He never wanted to be a king? Why He did not use His power to destroy the Romans or destroy the Pharisees? Why He would allow people to speak evil of Him and He would only forgive them? All the time, His whole way of life demonstrated, My kingdom is not of this world. I don't fight according to the principles of this world.

I don't live according to the values of this world. I don't fight for earthly things. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting.

Then I should not be delivered up to the Jews. So, a Christian is called, particularly those who are in leadership, are called to demonstrate by their life, by their whole way of life, that people who look at your life should be able to see that you do not live for this world. You do not fight for earthly things.

You allow people to take advantage of you as far as earthly things go, because you spend your life fighting for spiritual things. That's a very important principle. When we look at the life of Jesus, we see that this is how He lived.

He demonstrated Heaven's values in the different situations He found Himself in. When Peter would take out a sword to cut off the soldier's ear in Gethsemane, Jesus would pick up that ear from the ground and put it back and heal him and demonstrated, I'm not here to fight. I'm not here to cut off your ear.

I have come to bless you. Even if you hurt me, I want to bless you. That is our calling.

Jesus said in Luke chapter 16, Luke's gospel chapter 16, He said to the Pharisees, verse 14, Now the Pharisees who were lovers of money were listening to these things. Now there we can pause a moment and think. There was nobody in Israel who knew the scriptures as much as the Pharisees.

They knew every little commandment, every little law, every little detail, and yet they were lovers of money. Is it possible for a man who knows the scriptures well, who preaches from the scriptures, to be a lover of money? Yes. The Pharisees are proof of it.

And in two thousand years, we have more than enough proof of that in Christendom. You can be a religious leader. Pharisees were religious leaders, but they were lovers of money.

There didn't seem to be any connection between their religion and their attitude to money. These were in two different compartments. Their religious activity was one thing, and their love of money was another thing.

In their love of money, they were just like any worldly businessman. But the worldly businessman had no time for religious activity, but these Pharisees had time for religious activity. Now when a Christian worker puts these two in two separate compartments, that means his love of money is just like that of his unconverted relatives, and then of course he's also got religious activity, he can only be a Pharisee.

But when we follow Jesus, these things cannot be put separately. My knowledge of God has to change my attitude to money, to material things, to the honor of this world. If it has not, something is wrong.

You know when the Lord came to the house of Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus said, half my money I give to the poor, Jesus said, salvation has come to this house. Did he check up whether Zacchaeus believed all the correct doctrines? Today we check up a person's doctrines and say salvation has come. But Jesus knew that it was not just checking up on doctrines.

If a man's doctrine on money is not right, whatever other doctrines you check up, it's not enough. But when he said, whatever I have cheated others I'm going to give back four times, half my money I give to the poor, Jesus said, salvation has come. And when another rich man refused to part with his money, Jesus said, sorry salvation has not come.

He was correct in all his doctrines, otherwise. See Jesus checked up very much on the doctrine of money. The doctrine which is not found in usually in all the fundamental statements of the faith, of all different organizations.

Everything else is there, God is the Trinity, Jesus is the Son of God, we believe in the sinless life of Jesus, his substitutionary death, his resurrection, everything else. But I've never found a statement which contains, and we also believe that a man should not love money, if he has to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. That is never found anywhere, because if that is a statement, how many people will honestly be able to sign it? And then Jesus said to these people, verse 15, you are those who justify yourself in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts.

Do you know what a tremendous desire there is in all of us, to justify ourselves in the sight of men? To somehow prove to others, God is blessing my work, I am a faithful servant of God. Don't believe what these other people say, I am a faithful servant of God. Whose opinion do you want? Those men? What the Lord showed me from that verse was, if you try to prove to others, that you are a faithful servant of God, you are making those men your God.

You are worshipping their opinion. You must not worship the opinion of any man, if you are a servant of God. What does God think about your work, and your labor, and your life? That is enough.

It doesn't matter what people think. Can you honestly say that, dear brothers and sisters? Can you honestly say? It doesn't matter one bit to you, what people think. Particularly, worldly, preachers and leaders.

I think I would be concerned, to know what a godly man thinks, because a godly man, may be able to give me, a little insight into my life, which I may not have otherwise. That I would value very highly. I mean, if John or Peter or Paul, or someone like that was around, I think I would seek a lot of fellowship with such a man, so that I can have some insight into my life.

But the average person today, and the average Christian leader today, they don't have to bother about their opinion, because they don't have discernment. They can only evaluate your work. They will evaluate you by your work, and not by your sense of values.

And Jesus said, you are those who justify yourself in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts. And then this statement, that which is highly esteemed among men, is detestable or an abomination. The King James Version says, an abomination in God's eyes.

Think of that little expression. That which men value highly, is an abomination before God. I'll give you one example of what, in the Old Testament was called an abomination.

In the Old Testament, in the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord said to his people, through Moses, when they were out in the wilderness, he said, when any of you is going out to answer the calls of nature, take a spade with you, so that you dig, and when you have finished what you have done, cover it up. Because the Lord should not see any abomination, in the midst of the camp of Israel. Abomination.

That filthy thing that comes out of our bodies, we cover up, we flush it down the toilet, today. The Lord says it's an abomination. Okay, now, picture that as an abomination, and here it says, that which men value highly, is an abomination, in God's eyes.

What are the things that men value highly, education, culture, smartness, cleverness, wealth, property, big buildings, impressive structures, impressive organizations. Flush it down the toilet, the Lord says, these have no value in God's eyes. You can have them, or you may not have them.

It's just the same. These have no value. When you, I'm not saying we shouldn't have these things.

I'm saying when you place a value on these things, then you have gone astray. These are all big and great in the eyes of men. When you preach, my brothers and sisters, how do you preach to people? Do you preach, like some preachers do today, with great philosophical words, and some words I can't even understand.

I'm a little educated, but I can't even understand some of the things which, there are all types of new, new words, used in this 20th century by preachers, which I can't understand. Or do you preach like Jesus, simply, to the hearts of people, without trying to impress them with all your fantastic knowledge, and quoting this person, and quoting that person, and quoting the other book which you have read, and that authority, and this authority, and the other one. That which is great in the eyes of men, is an abomination in God's eyes.

It's not just neutral. If it were neutral, okay, God doesn't mind it. It's not neutral.

It has to be flushed down the toilet. In other words, after you use the toilet, flush it. Don't just leave it there.

That's what the Lord says. Get rid of this from your life. Don't just keep it there.

I mean, if you have a painting on your wall in your house, okay, that's neutral. But, if you leave your toilet unflushed, that's not in the same category. In which category is this thing, this trying to impress people with all this fantastic language.

It's not like a painting on the wall. It's like an unflushed toilet in your life. Get rid of it, the Lord says.

It's an abomination in God's eyes. That which is great in the eyes of men. Do you understand what is great in God's eyes? Do you think God is impressed by all this cleverness and philosophical language and words? Don't follow the example of such preachers.

Make Jesus your example. One of the first things I did in my life when I became a Christian and started preaching was to make a study of the preaching of Jesus. How he preached.

And I said, Lord, help me to preach like you preached. I don't want to make any earthly preacher my example. Jesus preached.

There is enough examples in the scriptures. Let me study that. How he made things so clear and so simple that even a child could understand.

He spoke to people once for one or two hours when they were walking to Emmaus from, I don't know how long it was, that journey, but at the end of it, they said their hearts burned within them when they heard him. Their hearts would not have burned within them if he had talked to them in all high-sounding language. He spoke to their hearts.

And that should be our longing, that we can be mouthpieces of God, that we deliberately get rid of all that the world considers great. We don't want to impress people by the greatness of our organization or the greatness of our work or the smartness of my personality. I mean, if you are smart, well, that's good, but don't think that has any value before God.

That's all I'm saying. It's good to sing well, but don't think that by singing well alone, God's work can be done. God's work is done by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And if you can't sing well, you can still serve God. I don't know whether all the apostles were good singers, but I'm sure they were humble people. God used them.

That's the main thing. What is heaven's values? Is it good-looking people, clever people? If that was heaven's values, then as soon as we are born again, we should become good-looking and we should become smart and clever, but we are not. We remain the same and most of God's people are not very good-looking.

It's true. All the good-looking people are out in the cinema world. They are serving the devil.

And most of God's people are not all so clever. All the brilliant scientists in the world are not God's people. Many of them are atheists and unbelievers.

You think it was difficult for God to make all of us clever? Not at all. But God is seeking to demonstrate through us in this world that that which is big and great in the eyes of men has no value in His eyes at all. And Jesus' earthly life was a demonstration of that.

He was only a carpenter and a very simple... and He called people who were living in very... working in very simple ordinary professions. Do you think you can make an impact in your society if some film star gets converted and comes to your church and you suddenly make him an elder brother in your church because he is a well-known film star? What is your understanding? It happens in Christendom. Just because this fellow was a converted film star we think that he has become spiritual now.

No. It doesn't mean a thing. This is... The man is great in the world.

You think Jesus is dependent on these converted film stars to let His kingdom go forward? No. There is so much of this type of thinking in Christian circles that we impress people by the things worldly people seek... do to impress. And unless we get this out of our mind we've got to flush it down the toilet.

It's an abomination in God's eyes. I say, Lord, it is Christ-likeness which God values. It's Christ-likeness.

That's what God is looking for. Anything in your life... And I've just taken a few examples. Money.

Do you think that more money means God's blessing more? It's not true. Till... If you seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness, what we need will be added to us. To have far more than we need is not always a blessing.

It's extremely dangerous. The world places value on... Sometimes I've felt it's good for believers to make a list of all the things in your life which the world places value on. Make a list of it.

And all of us have some things which the world also appreciates. And I'm not saying we've got to get rid of them. There are some things we cannot get rid of.

For example, if you're a handsome man, what can you do? You don't have to cut up your face to make yourself look ugly. That's stupidity. That's Hinduism.

That's not Christianity. All I'm saying is don't place a value on it. For example, if you're intelligent.

I don't pretend that I'm dumb. I'm not dumb. God has given me a certain measure of intelligence and I don't try to get rid of it.

But I do say, Lord, I don't place any value on it. I cannot serve God with my intelligence if I don't have the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what I say.

Make a list of those things. You don't have to get rid of any of them. But put value equals zero in God's eyes.

Value equals zero. Value equals zero. And then put what are the things that have value? Christlikeness, the power of the Holy Spirit.

These are the things that have value. I think that's a very good exercise. And to live by that then we shall be preserved from going astray.

Let's just pray. Heavenly Father, there are many things that we have thought of this morning and we don't want to think of them lightly or easily forget them because our future is so dependent on our attitude towards these things. And also the lives of many whom we have committed to our charge in our local churches.

The way they grow depends so much on the way we grow. Their values depend on our values. We pray that you'll help us to take these days of fellowship here seriously.

That our lives will take a new turn in a direction more for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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