

Does Jesus Believe In You?

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Yes, Lord. We are weak; You are strong. Jesus, keep us from all wrong. And we'll be satisfied as long as You walk close to us, even as we walk close to You. Even as we sang, O Lord, I pray, Lord, when our feeble life is over and time for us will be no more, Father, time passing by; six months of this year are over, another half year left. Father, I pray that we'll be circumspect; we'll walk as fools but as wise, redeeming the time. Father, we'll be tuned into Your Spirit, O Lord. Our minds will be focused. We'll be sober-minded. We'll be vigilant. Father, grant us grace to that end this morning. And even now, as we meditate on Your Word, speak to our hearts. Speak to us this morning. We need You, O Lord Father, to hear, to speak, to obey. Lord, we are weak, but You are strong. Strengthen us this morning to hear. Grant us concentration come against every spirit of distraction. Calm us, Lord, this morning that we'll be still in Your presence and know that You are God. Grant us grace to that end and anoint us even as we speak and even as we hear. Keep us from wrong. Keep us close to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

So, in the light of all the sermons we have been listening to in our Church for quite some time now, I've been meditating upon the last two Wednesdays sermon, the Sunday sermon and have been listening to it over and over again. You know one guy put a prayer request, '2B math teacher'. Well, really that's a very good request. That's been my experience. I mean, I've been in academia for quite some time. And I think I have fair bit judgement and I am entitled to my opinion, and I could be wrong. But you know, there're very few professors who are good teachers. And very few teachers, I found that even in universities, few teachers, lot of professors, very few teachers. It's not very different in Christendom too, very few teachers, speak the authentic Word, have a burden for their flock. And therefore, never lose sight of that. Just hold on to every Word as if your life depends upon it. Listen to the sermons, over and over again. And one of the tricks that I have learnt because of media now, I play the sermon at one-and-a-half-time speed so that I can listen to it twice in the same time. You can do that, alright?

So, today's message I've titled "Does Jesus believe in you?" How many of you believe in Jesus? Hands up in the air. Oh! That's nice. We'll find out if Jesus believes in you? That's the question that I want to ask. Does Jesus believe in me? It's a very important question. And it's a very Scriptural question and I am not going extra-Biblical at all. Its right there in Scripture. But before I go to that primary portion and Scripture, I want to look at one verse in 2 Timothy 3.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (and in spite of all that verse 5 will say, they will have a but they have no power.) ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

They'll have a form of godliness but they have no power. They'll have a form of religiosity, they'll possibly be regular at Church, week after week, or at least Sunday after Sunday, Bible study after Bible study, if not week after week; on first Sunday or I don't know. It says that only average, in the U.S. the statistics says that 20% of the average Church-goers are regular every Sunday. That's a very exorbitant estimate. I believe it's even more conservative than that. So, there's only a form of godliness but they don't have power. There is no power inside of them; there is no life of Christ. Life of Christ is not there. And I just wanted to look at that; why? You know, look at last Wednesdays, "Scientific or Sign-tific?" And it's interesting you know, how Jesus debunks the sign-tific. It's found in *John 2:23-25*. And that is from where I get my title for my message this morning.

John 2:23-25

²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed (in His name. love that. Many believed. I believe in Jesus. They all said that. I believe in Jesus.) in His name when they saw the signs which He did. (remember the signs that He did. So many signs He did. And so many of them believed. On the other hand,) ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself...

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See that? Fantastic! Jesus, on His part, He did not commit Himself. By the way, the word 'believe' and the word 'commit' in the Greek come from the same word "Pistueo" from which we get the word "Pistis" = faith, faithful, believe. So, commit and believe are the same word in the original.

²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, ²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

I just wanted to look at few more translations to get a better picture of what He's trying to say in verse 24.

²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, (English Standard Version)

²⁴ But Jesus didn't trust them, for he knew mankind to the core. (Living Bible)

Love that!

²⁴ But Jesus knew what was in their hearts, and he would not let them have power over him. (Contemporary English Version)

I love that. In other words, they all said, "We believe in You, Jesus!" But they believed in Jesus, but Jesus did not believe in them. You see, that's the problem with, 'sign-tific' people, people who have gone after signs and wonders. Miracles actually, honestly speaking, miracles don't change the hearts of men. And you know it. And Scripture is replete with examples of people who experienced mighty miracles incredible signs and wonders – frogs in their beds and they didn't want the frogs to go. Unbelievable signs, like God bent over backwards to show His power to so many people, but you know what? They still do not believe in Him. And it's quite possible that you might find people here in this congregation. We need to ask ourselves this question: does Jesus believe in us? What does it mean? So, how do we check if Jesus believes in me or not? How do we know? So, the question is: does Jesus trust me? How do we know that? And you'll know when you'll see examples, I am going to go through some Scripture to see patterns of people; I mean from their lives we learn lesson, and most of them is from the New Testament and few from the Old Testament. And through the *Gospel according to John*, the first man who was this intellectual Jewish guy, who was a Rabbi, who was a Pharisee, was the part of the Sanhedrin, he sees the signs and the wonders and miracles, and he goes to Jesus in the night. And you know famous intercourse between Nicodemus and Jesus.

John 3:1-5

¹ There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; (You know he is trying to flatter Jesus.) for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

You know trying make talk and trying to flatter Him possible, I don't know. And Jesus know, He doesn't not give him opportunity to flatter Him, "come straight to the point." And He says to Nicodemus, let me tell you something He says,

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (And Nicodemus in his scientific brain, this is what he says) ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

In other words, Jesus is saying, "If you want Me to trust you, I will never trust a man who has not experienced new birth. First thing, if you want Me to believe in you, I will never trust a man who is not born from above just the way I am born from above." And I, honestly speaking, sometimes I go to different Churches and even in our Church, I am not sure how many of us really have the assurance that we are born again? Do we really have the assurance that we are truly born again? Born of God born from above. Or are we being presumptuous that you are born but not born again? How do we know from Scripture that we are truly born again? You know the first thing I know if I am truly born again? This is what Peter will say,

1 Peter 2:2-3

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

The first thing I know I am born again when I have intense super natural desire for the Word of God because I have tasted the goodness of God. You have to see babies. My sister-in-law has twins. And the elder one is ravenous. When she is hungry, the whole home comes down and she cannot wait. She just drinks the milk and she spills the milk and when the milk gets over, she starts crying. We used to have Hrishu; I don't know. When he was growing up, whenever he used to get angry, he used to say "Palla". That's it. The whole world has to stop. And he used to have this position and he used to say, "Give me my milk." You see, and this is like when you see the new born baby and the way it's hungry and the way she cries for milk. It's doesn't matter. "I don't care if you haven't slept the whole night. I want my milk." That's it. Finished. And then, you have to nurse the baby. There is an intense craving for the Word of God and I know; I know. Even my own life there was a time in my own life for 6 months, from morning to evening, there was only devouring the Word. How much I got of it, I don't know; but I just read from *Genesis to Revelation* and parts of the Bible over and over again because I was craving for that milk. That is how I know. Is there an intense craving for the Word of God in your life? It's a craving. You crave for, just not ordinary milk but pure spiritual milk. Why do I have this craving? Because I tasted the goodness of God and we say, right? The worship leader always says, "God is good all the time and all the time, God is good." Have you tasted the goodness of God? Thy loving kindness is better... really? Actually, the people with the ESV Bible and most scholars will say it's not loving kindness; Thy steadfast love is better. Are you sure? Yes, his steadfast love is better than life? My Words are Spirit and life, I have tasted Him. You know that song we sign in Telugu? "Ruchi chuchi yerigithi nee Yehovah uthamudaniyu" Really, He is Utham? He's the utama purush? Did you experience? Did you taste the goodness of God, that He is been good to me? How do I know that I have tasted the goodness of God? When there has been genuine repentance. You see, when there is no genuine repentance in our lives we have not tasted the goodness of God. We sang that song, one of my favorite songs when I was growing up in the mainland Church. We used to sign it without meaning it. "Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy, O Lord. Thou art worthy to receive glory, Glory and honor and power. For Thou hast created, hast all things created, For Thou hast created all things. And for Thy pleasure they have been created; Thou art worthy, O Lord. For His pleasure."

You know, one of the very scary sermons that you should read sometimes, if you really want to get scared is Johnathan Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in The Hand of An Angry God". And you know what? In that sermon, he says, "God is under no obligation to withhold His wrath towards the people on the earth." His very character cries for justice. It's only restarting power of God which is holding Him back to pour out His wrath. That is the reason why John the Baptist will tell the Pharisees, "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath of the God? It's the wrath of God which has been made, it's been expressed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppress the truth in unrighteousness." There is a God who is really angry. You should read the first five *Books of Moses*. And sometimes, better to read and I am discovering that over period of time, we get this – you should read the Bible in the Kings James Version (KJV). Recently, I went to a talk. This gentlemen over there he said, "Please don't project other than the Kings James Version Bible." And most gulti's don't understand KJV Bible. They don't understand really honestly. Sorry Telugus don't understand. I was also addicted; I was also of the KJV, because one day, I was hearing a Bible teacher who said, "How many of you guys are NIV positive?" I got a shock. No, I am not. I read the KJV Bible but see most of the time, I didn't understand half of it. I read through several portions of the Bible not knowing what was being said because its intense sometimes, you read Pastor says, "I read the Good News Bible sometimes." Read it. No problem. Read the Living Bible paraphrase and I was reading recently through the *Book of Numbers*. You know the Levities are set apart for the service in the temple. And one of the things after God consecrates the Levites for the service of the temple, He says, "Levites, ensure the people don't come close to the tabernacle; otherwise, I will break forth over them in My anger." So, what were the Levites were supposed to do? They had to guard the anger of God from breaking forth towards the people because that's exactly what happened, right, remember? When the Ark of Covenant is captured back from the Philistine territory into Israel and they send them on that bullock cart and all look at the Ark of the Covenant, so many people thousands of people died. Because God breaks forth in His angry He is a holy God, He is a vengeful wrathful God. And you know what? He restrains His anger because He doesn't want to consume His creation. I mean, one of my favorite; I think I mentioned this several of my messages; one of my favorite movie is "Schindler's List". I watched it several times. There is a conversation between Amon and Schindler. Amon is this concentration camp, he is the head of the concentration camp. He is a ruthless devil, a Nazi. He belongs to a SS party. And

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what he does is, when he gets up in the morning, he takes his rifle and he practices shooting from the Jews in the concentration camp. So, there's one random girl moving, he takes the gun, shoots. Wicked, vengeful, nasty devil. And Schindler, on the other hand, is a guy who wants to save the Jew. And in a party, Amon is drunk and Schindler is asking Amon; he has a question: "Amon, Amon, why do you think the Jews are scared of us? Why do you they fear us?" And Amon says, "You know why they fear us?" Because we have the power to kill them. And Schindler looks at Amon and he says, "Amon, Amon, you called that power Amon? You call that power? I tell you what is power, Amon. You know, there was a king and an emperor. And he came to know, a subject was plotting to kill him. And this guy who was plotting to kill the emperor, comes to know that the emperor has known, that this guy is plotting to kill him. He is scared; he is so scared that the emperor going to cut off, chop off his hair. He rushes to the palace of the emperor, falls on his face before the emperor and he says, "Please, lord, Forgive me!" And, you know what the emperor does? He looks at the guy and he says, "Go!" And then, he says, "Amon, Amon, he has every justification to kill him but he restrains his power. That is what is, power. That is power."

Sometimes, we, in the New Covenant Church, especially in the Gentile Church, we don't understand the holiness of God, how holy he is. The best of people, when they saw the glory of God, they said, "Woe is me! I am coming apart in my seems." I am just falling apart, I am undone. But, you know what? He restrains. And I see, even in our own Church, restrain, restrain... You know, there is verse in *Ecclesiastes*, you don't have to turn there. *Just because, God doesn't execute judgment on people, people's heart is bent towards evil.* He is just restraining His hand. He is restraining His hand over our lives. And one of the things, that the Gospel does – if you have really, truly been apprehended by the Gospel, you know what will happen to you? Your eyes will be opened, to the holiness of God and the depravity of your own soul. And you will say, "Lord! All I deserve is judgment, but you have been good to me, O Lord! You have been good." That is experiencing, New birth.

You know what? A lot of people have actually not experienced new birth. They just came and somebody said a prayer, they have some emotional experience but they have never, ever been confronted by the holiness of God. How do I know this?

Romans 2:4

⁴Or do you despise the riches of His (What? Read that) goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to (what?) repentance?

If you have tasted that the Lord is good. Have you tasted Him? You know what? "Lord, I want to know You, Lord. I want to please You. I don't want to grieve You. You could have just wiped me off from the face of the earth. You could have condemned me to an eternal hell, away from your goodness but, Lord, in Your goodness, You extended mercy towards me. I am ever grateful. I want to know You." There is a sincere craving to know the Word of God. Do have craving for the Word of God, my dear brothers and sisters? Do you sincerely crave? Tell me how many days you can go without eating? How many days can you go without eating the Word of God? *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.* So, how much, if God were to look at your soul today, this morning, does He look at a famished, you don't have proper nutrition? Have you seen, people who have malnutrition? Have you seen children? And when you look at their physical bodies, do they look attractive? I mean, if God were to see our spiritual souls, does He see attraction in that? You know how babies, when they are whole, how their attractiveness – their cute little things, and the cheeks growing because they drink the milk and they are so beautiful, their lips are rosy, eyes are blue, fair etc, etc. Why? Because they've been feeding on their mother's milk. Do you feed on God's milk? Question: can you go without eating the food? That's the first question I need to ask myself.

And then, second – how do I know that I am really born again? Anyone born of God refuses to practice sin. Because God sees the Bride in him, he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God. There is one thing that is inside of us. It's not that we don't struggle with sin but there is a desire, "I don't want to sin, Lord. I don't want to sin." Do you have that desire in you or do you succumb so easily to temptation? Another verse,

1 John 5:18

¹⁸We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keep himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

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What does it tell me? It tells me, "There is paradigm shift in our attitude, towards sin." Sin is, "I hate it, Lord!" How much do I hate it? Remember Phinehas; you know what God says about Phinehas? "This guy, Phinehas, was as zealous as I was about sin He was not just zealous, he was as zealous as I was about sin, so even if Moses didn't lift up his rod, this guy takes his spear and thrusts two guys who are committing fornication in the camp of Israel." Question, therefore, otherwise" am I truly born again?

Every time, you say; whenever I come to this Church, you should always have this question" am I saved? You guys are too tough. I'll tell you something: "You do not see the ten thousand, ten million, trillion, billion, blessings that God is actually pouring out over your lives, because you of the darkness of this pulpit. You don't see it. If God were to open your spiritual eyes, remember this guy Gehazi? "I can't see, O lord. I can't see..." Elisha says, "God, just open his eyes once." You have an idea of the protection that you enjoy in this Church. How much God has protected your relationship with God, your marriages, what have you, from just being destroyed. So, question is: if God, I mean, if Jesus has to believe in me, first thing He says, "Are you really born again?" Do I see life in you, that you are truly born again? You could have believed, you could have heard a message. You could have also been baptized, after hearing the message but never be truly born again. You know that? That is the reason why, many of the people who come to our Church, they say, "Anna, I want to get baptized. I got baptized once but that was not baptism at all." That was just confirmation that I am a member of so and so Church (I don't want to name the Church) that confirmation that when I die, you'll give me 6 feet land." And that is all. And, when I get married, you'll give me a certificate. That is all it is worth. In eternity, it has absolutely no value at all." Many people come to us, "Do you have a burial ground?" Why? "I don't know where I will be buried." What a stupid question that is. What a stupid objection, not to come to our Church. See, you could have baptized, have heard, could have some kind of an outward experience, but not truly born again. How do I know it? There is this guy called, "Simon, the sorcerer." Acts 8, we'll see that, from the Bible.

Acts 8:9-24

⁹ But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, ¹⁰ to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." ¹¹ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. ¹³ Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

There was no genuine conversion. There was only this drama that was going on. He got attracted towards the drama. There was no genuine change in his heart. How do I know it? This is what happens later on. Peter and John go there and they ask the question "Have you received the Holy Spirit in Samaria?" They haven't received and they lay hands on them and they receive the Holy Spirit. Simon the Sorcerer also looks at and he wants that power.

¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

Peter has become a very discerning Apostle now. He already condemned one husband and wife team to death. He is in the Spirit and he sees through and through. Look at the diagnosis of this guy is.

²⁰ But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! ²¹ You have neither part (of our church) nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

"You still have not been delivered. Still bound in sin, you just want power."

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²⁴ Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."

He is not saying, "O Lord, forgive my sin, forgive my iniquity, forgive my covetousness," No, not born again. Was he baptized? Yes, he was. So, how do I know that I am born again? There is an intense desire for me to shun away from sin. That's the reason why it says in,

2 Timothy 2:19

¹⁹ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

You need to run away from sin. There is a running and a fleeing away from sin. Otherwise, you may have a gift, you may have a kind of gift, but you don't have power, you don't have Jesus. He doesn't believe in you. How do I know this?

Matthew 7:22-23

²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

In other words, Jesus is saying, "I don't believe in you." Your confession I don't believe. I don't believe in you.

Very interesting example you will find in *Numbers*. Balaam's donkey is speaking to him and he is arguing not marveling at the sign. Talk about the dumbness. Who is dumb – the donkey or him? This guy goes and Balak gives him money and says all kinds of things to him and say, "Okay, whatever the Lord says, I will prophesy." And he took up his oracle and Balak, the king of Moabite; Balak is taking him to different vantage point from this side, "Curse." "Do one thing. Get seven bulls and seven rams and I will prepare an altar here and I will sacrifice and I will hear from the Lord whatever He says, I will prophesy." So, he opens his mouth now,

Numbers 23:7-10

⁷ And he took up his oracle and said: "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, From the mountains of the east. 'Come, curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!'

I remember, Pastor was praying, right!

⁸ "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced? Is it true? Is it coming from Balaam's mouth? ⁹ For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations. ¹⁰ "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!"

What does God say when He hears that from Balaam's mouth? "I don't believe in you." He is saying all the right things but I don't believe in you. Like we had a prayer request in the morning, "Let him be drawn close to You Jesus," and Pastor said, "I don't believe in you." Are the words right? Yes, they are right. You should listen to the students when they come to class. They come to my class, listen to my lecture and after the lecture is over they want to come and do a thesis with me and they say, "Sir, I want to work with you." I look at them and I know them. "Sir, I enjoyed your class, the lecture was good, etc." They try to flatter and sometimes, the girls come and do a song and a dance also. I have seen that in Universities. Girls have no shame these days. I worked in IIT for eight years, the batch of girls, you should see the dresses – shorter and tighter by the batch. Unbelievable! They will come and say, "Sir, I like your lecture." You know what I say? "I don't believe in you. You have no idea about Robotics. No idea." They can't sustain. They would give up in the middle and run away. Look at this guy

Numbers 31:8, 16

⁸ They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.

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Did he die the death of righteous? No! He was condemned with the ungodly and unrighteous. Why?

¹⁶ Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

What was Balaam using? You know what was Balaam using? He had a gift but you should read carefully Scripture even though guy had got a prophetic gift how God records his prophesy.

Numbers 24:1

¹ Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

He was using sorcery! What did he have? Did he have a gift? When your heart is given over to covetousness, your heart is not right with the Lord, even if you speak the truth, God says, "That is sorcery!" That is the reason why Jesus never accepts commendation by demons. Have you seen? "We know who You are, the Son of the mighty God." "Shut up! Please come out." "I don't want a commendation from you. You are a lying spirit. You are already a liar and you are trying to tell the truth. So, even if you tell a truth, it is a lie. I don't believe in you. Because the correctness of doctrine will not make the guy true. Because demons also believe but they tremble." They are still lying spirits even if they confess the truth. So, whenever devil is giving you commendation, ask it to shut its mouth. That's exactly what happened to Paul. Paul and Silas were going in the city of Philippi and then, this girl comes and says, "Oh, listen to them, the servants of the Most High God." Constantly bugging them. And he looks at them and say, "We don't your comments. Shut your mouth and come out." We don't want to take commendations from demons. Demons don't have to testify about us. How can we believe you? You are the lying spirit.

So. God says, "I don't believe in you." This thing is there in many believers. They speak the truth even when they speak the truth they are lying.

Joshua 13:22

²² The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the soothsayer, magic among those who were killed by them.

On the other hand, you should see an authentic prophet, one authentic prophet. Whenever you find authentic prophet, they will scare you. Whenever you meet the authentic prophet, you love them and you hate them. You will have a love-hate relationship with them. This is true in my life. Shibu (mentor) is one guy who used to speak the truth to everybody without compromise. And I knew people in my batch, I liked them. Honestly, I was not better than these guys. So many guys hated but they also loved him. They hated him because he used to call them to their face. This guy is amazing. Yesterday, he sent me a message, "Vijay, listen to this message. All men struggle with sexual passion and you are a minister. You need to keep that in control. Listen to this message from Zac Poonen." I already heard it several months back. Well, I will hear it again. I heard the part of it. It's always like that.

I remember once we were going in the train to a Youth Camp and all the girls and the boys were together that particular compartment. We were chatting through the night and Shibu was on the other side was praying. And just went to him and try to listen to him. He was saying "Lord, girls and boys are together, Lord. Protect them and keep them pure Lord. Let not unwholesome talk come from their mouth. Do not let the flirtatious spirit flow, O Lord." I looked at him and went and told Sangeet, "Sangeet, this is what he is praying." "O God! Shibu! Shibu!" I used to hate him but I used to love him. You need to understand those kinds of people who put boundaries around us and because of those boundaries we stayed in those boundaries and we are here because of those people who put boundaries for us. Who always confronted us with truth in love. You see this happens in,

1 Kings 17:17-24

¹⁷ Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him.

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You know what she said? Elijah didn't even take one Bible Study at her home. He was only eating her food. Just living in her home. To have a prophet like Elijah in your home and your sin not being exposed, it is impossible. That's what you say love-hate relationship with prophets. So, what happens?

¹⁸ So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" ¹⁹ And he said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰ Then he cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?" ²¹ And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." ²² Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. ²³ And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!" ²⁴ Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth."

You know what God is telling to Elijah? "I believe you, Elijah."

So, do you have hatred towards sin? Are you fighting sin in your life? Ask yourself this question. I am not saying that you don't fall; no, we are not talking about perfection. That will only happen when we die at whatever level. So, when we die, if we are three years old, in the spiritual realm, perfect three years old in all eternity. Are you finding sin or sin conquering you? Are you overcoming sin or sin overcoming you? It is the question. Whatever is the betting sin, do you believe that?

Third thing – how do I know that I am born again?

1 John 4:7-8

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

One of the things happens to you after you are genuinely born again, you always want to fellowship with like-minded people. You always chose company of believers – you want to be with them, you want to be encouraged by them, as Paul said, "I want you to be edified in the faith, and through your ministry, I will also be edified in my faith." That's what happens. I know so many people in our Church sometimes, do they really like fellowship? Do they really take opportunities? "Today, I want to be with my brothers." The question is: do the brothers like to be around you? That's an interesting question. Do brothers want to be around you? Do they like to come and say "I like to stay with Vijay. I want to talk to Vijay. When he talks to me, I get encouraged. I get motivated, I get fired up." You should see our conversations – Sam, Peter, Eric and I. You do not know the kind of times that we enjoy when we get together and discuss the Word. It's amazing. It's unbelievable. Sometimes, I ask ladies, do you enjoy like that? See, you should love fellowship.

Peter 1:22-23

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again,

You see that? When you are truly born again, you have this craving to enjoy fellowship with other brothers and sisters. You want to be with them, you want to be around your brothers, you love them, you care for them. When you see somebody in need, you want to help them. Otherwise, you are Sriman 420. I didn't say that, John says in,

1 John 4:20

²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

You know what God will say? "I don't believe you." Therefore, this is important that love from a pure heart towards brothers.

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Second, when people saw the sign; Jesus performed a sign. This is what happens.

John 6:14-15

¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

You know what he is saying? "Do you want Me to be your King? I don't believe you." Really? "Jesus is the Lord of my life; All to Jesus, I surrender; On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." Really? Is that true in your life? "Jesus is my King." That's exactly what happened, right? "Hosanna!" He is coming; they put their garments on the floor and the donkey came; they said, "Blessed is the One who comes in the Name of the Lord." And they all thought that He was going to Pilate's office, kick him out and become the King. No. Instead, where did He go? To the temple. Jesus does not believe in us. Do you know why He does not believe in us? It says in *John 6*,

John 6:25-26

²⁵ And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" ²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

In other words, "I don't believe you." Ask this question this morning: is Jesus really the Lord of your life? When you sing your songs, does He believe in you or does He say, "Child, I don't believe in you"?

Next category of people who said, "We believe in Jesus." *John 8*; very interesting.

John 8:30-32

³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. ³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

You see that? What will happen? "You will start abiding in Me; you will begin to allow Me to probe you, to show areas in your life which don't align in Me. If you truly believe in Me, you will abide in My Word, you will love My Word even if it is not easy for you to digest. You will love it; you will treasure it." You will see what is happening over here.

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

You see, this is really probing. Jesus is very serious. When you say, "You are our Teacher,"

Mark 10:17-18

¹⁷ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

So, what was He saying? "I don't believe you that you think I am good." In other words, "What is your standard?"

Recently, there's a very interesting news that happened in India. How many of you have heard the name Ramesh Babu Praggananda? How many chess lovers here; at least, who play chess once in a while, like me? Ramesh Babu Praggananda is 12 years and 10 months old. Mother is up to date in news. She knows. She keeps track. 12 years, 10-month-old guy recently became the grand master from India. He was the youngest international master and now, he became the grandmaster. According to the records, he is the second youngest grandmaster ever in the history of chess. The first was, I think, some guy from Russia. I forgot his name. He is 12 years 10 months old. Recently, he is from Chennai. He came back from this tournament and he is garlanded. All kind of things happened to him. Something interesting happened. To become a grandmaster; I'm not a chess player at all. I just enjoy sometimes, here and there. I like to watch it; I don't like to play it. I'm

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just like these football guys, who like to watch football but not so much interested in playing. Zac Poonen was saying, "Christianity is like a football match. There are 22 people who actually require rest and millions of people who actually require exercise, who have to be on the ground." Christianity is like that. That is besides the point. But I just like to watch it. What happens is, to become a grandmaster; it is very interesting. To become a grandmaster, you have to play 3 grandmaster norm level games; meaning – there will be 3 tournaments. You should have played against guys who have a higher rating than you; not once but thrice; people who are better than you, who have a higher rating than you; consistently, you should have topped the tournaments in order to get the grandmaster norm and recently, he got, not one; not two; but the third and he became the grandmaster. What happens? When do they say that you are a great chess player? You beat people who are better than you. This guy comes to Jesus and he says, "Jesus, You are good." Jesus is saying, "I don't believe you. What is your standard? How do you know that I am good?" It's amazing, right? Is Jesus not good? How many of you believe that Jesus is not good? It's like Moses writing, "Moses, you are the meekest man. Write it, please." "Lord, is it not an oxymoron that I write that I'm the meekest man. Don't You think I would become proud?" "You are so humble, Moses, even when you write it, you are so meek, that you will still remain meek. Your meekness is the fact that you are so meek that you can write that you are meek." So, he writes, "Okay, Lord. I'm the meekest man on earth." So, is Jesus not good? Yes, He is good. Is Jesus lying? "How do you know that I'm good?" If he would have said, "Jesus is not good," would He have accepted us?

John 1:43-51

⁴³ *The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."* ⁴⁴ *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.* ⁴⁵ *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."* ⁴⁶ *And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"* (In other words, "Jesus, not good.") *Philip said to him, "Come and see."* ⁴⁷ *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"*

You know what He is saying? "I believe you, Nathanael. I believe you. You are so transparent, even when you said that I'm not good, you were so guileless that I believe you." You see that? One guy comes and says, "Jesus, You are very good. Good Master." "I don't believe you." Another guy comes and says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That means, "Jesus, You are not really good?" You know what Jesus says? "I believe you." It's amazing. And you know what commendation He gives? Another translation will say, "A true Israelite in whom there is no deceit." Who is saying this? The King of the universe, the Creator of the world; He looks at all the Israelites and He looks at this guy and He says, "This guy, absolutely transparent. No guile on him at all." I will give my right hand to get a commendation like that from Jesus. My right hand. If Jesus were to say, "Vijay, you have no guile," can you imagine that commendation? Think about it – "Vijay, truly a GTC-ite." I'm just putting it in my context, "In whom there is no guile, no pretense, transparent." What would happen to you? "I believe you." Does Jesus believe you? You know, He doesn't care. He is not going to flatter anybody. He is just going to tell it as it is. He is not going to flatter.

I remember; I know this is Muthyala Muggu. There is a movie in Telugu. A long time back, there was this story called 'Muthyala Muggu'. There was a politician in the movie. That politician, he used to get flattered and people used to take advantage of him and after being taken advantage of, he comes to realize that this people have taken advantage of him. So, he says, "From next time, I'm not going to get flattered." So, what does he do? He hires a guy who plays the mridungam, dolak. And he puts a flower in his ears. If anybody comes to the politician and says, "Sir, you are so great," this guy starts off. "Sir, why is he playing like that?" "If you keep flattering me like that, he will play more like that." So, if you praise him more, he will play even more loudly and they would say, "Sorry, I'm not going to say anything." That's how many people are; they are just flatterers. That's exactly what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. You know what he said? "Whenever they play the music, the trumpet, everybody should bow before that idol." "You, king, live forever." That's what they thought and they lied to him left, right and centre. They knew that this fellow was going to die the next day. "King, live forever." Have you seen the movie 300, how that guy thinks that he is god? "King, live forever." Flatterers, dime a dozen in Christendom who will not tell you the truth. Jesus looks at all of them and says, "I don't believe you." They come and flatter. They will come and say, "Pastor-garu." Even in our own Church, so many people who are such flatterers but they were snakes of the first order and we didn't even know that they were going to flatter; music going on. "Pastor Vijay, I heard your sermon. Fantastic." I was thinking, "That was one of the worst sermons I had given. You should come and ask Pastor James for reviews. He will tell you." "Oh," flatterers. But there was one guy Jesus looks and he says, "Boy, this guy is not a flatterer. No guile." That is the reason why *Psalm 32* says, "*Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose*

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sin is forgiven; to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity and in whose spirit, there is no deceit. Blessed.” Oh saints, to get a commendation like that from Jesus! Jesus looks at him and he says, “Nathanael, truly an Israelite.” Nathanael is surprised. He is shocked.

48 Nathanael said to Him, (not our Nathanael but Nathanael) “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, (I know people who are without guile; they are like Me. They are My kind,) when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” 49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, (no flattery,) You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (You know what He promises Nathanael? Look at the promise He gives Nathanael) 50 Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” 51 And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

You know what God says? “Nathanael, I see that you are a man without guile. I’m going to give you an opening into the spiritual realm. I will give you revelation. I will entrust you with My revelation, My prophesy and you will become My apostle. You will have an open Heaven always because I see you don’t have guile in your heart.” Wow. You know what He says? “I believe you, Nathanael. I believe you.”

It’s true; sometimes, have you seen babies? They just keep staring like that into nothing and they keep smiling? I wonder what they are smiling at. I think they are seeing angels. There was one girl. I think Catherine Aunty is not here. I think she is flying to US; she is not here today. She has a granddaughter whose name is Nathanea. You know Nathanea? I remember when she was young, she was like less than a year or one-and-a-half-year-old. She was in our home. There was a rushing wind and the window just; it was a glass window. It slammed shut. There was a glass window and she was playing under the window. The sharp glass piece was about to come unto her and nothing happened. She was okay. Everything fell to her side. The mother was in the other room. She rushed to the bedroom and she looked and asked, “Nathanea, did anything happen?” Nathanea looked at her mother and said, “Mama, angel came.” I believe that because they don’t lie, because after Nathanael (not our Nathanael but our Nathanael also,), they are the most guileless. Babies are absolutely guileless. They will see into the spiritual realm. Their eyes are open. You know what God is telling Nathanael, “Nathanael, I believe you because the Kingdom of God is like you. People like you who are humble like little children. To you, I will give you a hope in Heaven.”

Remember the story of Naaman? Naaman comes and says, like Pastor was saying; he was expecting the prophet to come and put his mantra and heal him. God has a way to humble proud people. You know what he tells Naaman, “Go to the river Jordan and dip seven times.” This guy was so upset; he was on his way back to Syria and one of his servants said, “Lord, if he had said something simpler, wouldn’t you have done it? Come on, do it.” You know what he does? Naaman goes and takes off his robe. For the first time in his life, his entire platoon sees that this guy is leprous from head to toe. You should read the *Book of Leviticus* on this. Do you know what happens in the *Book of Leviticus*? Whenever somebody has got a leprous scab, he has to come to the priest. The priest will look at the scab and he observes the scab and says, “Seven days outside; I will see.” When he comes back and the scab is not gone, the leprous scab is not gone, he will declare that you are leprous; you are unclean. On the other hand, if the guy is having scab from head to toe, you know what the high priest pronounces? Whether he is clean or unclean? Clean. Isn’t it interesting? The guy who has got a scab, only a scab; a part of his body is leprous, he says, “You are unclean,” if he is not healed within seven days but a guy who is leprous from head to toe, he says, “You are clean.” You know why? Because this guy says, “There is nothing good in me; I am like this from head to toe, absolutely corrupt.” You know what God says? “Clean. No guile. Clean.” God’s ways are not our ways. This is exactly what happens to Naaman. Naaman opens his armor. From head to toe, he is, from the first time in his life, coming out on the open and telling, “This is what I really am. I’m having a façade of power but look at my sinful nature.” So, what happens? “Go into the waters of Jordan.” First time. He came out; did it go? No. Second time. No. Third time. No. Fourth time. No. Fifth time. No. Sixth time. No. Seventh time and he comes out, you know what happens to his skin? It becomes like the skin of a baby. Unless you are converted like little children, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. So, question: can God trust you? Are you sneaky? Are there sneaky people? We are all sneaky. I told you my testimony of being sneaky, right? We are very intelligent to do wrong, very stupid to do right. Sneaky spirit. We are, many times, snakes.

Look at this in *Luke 16*; Jesus says; how Jesus actually talks about people with guile. This is found in *Luke 16*.

Luke 16:10-12

¹⁰ ***“Whoever can be trusted with very little...***

In other words, if I can believe you in little things; it is the same word – ‘trust’, ‘believe’. “If I can trust you in little things, I can also trust you in big things,”

...can also be trusted with much, and whoever is (unbelieving or) dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ ***So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly (or unrighteous) wealth, who will trust you with true riches?***

Open heaven. Who can trust you? That is the reason why Pastor keeps telling in the Pastors’ Conference. Every time, he comes and tells the Pastors, “Pastors, ensure that you deal with money very carefully. Otherwise, you will not have an open heaven over you. you will not have revelation. You will have nothing to give your congregation. It would be dead sermons week after week from your pulpit because you are not righteous with mammon.” You see? Think about it; are we faithful in giving our tithes? Think about it. Do Pastors pay their tithes or are they exempt from tithes? They say, “We live off tithes.” It says in *Leviticus*, “The Levites, when they received tithes from the people, they have to take a tithe of that and give it to God.” And that’s the reason why it says in *Hebrews*, “When Abraham was giving Melchizedek tithes, Levi, who was in the loins of Abraham, he was paying tithes to God.” So many Churches will say, “Tithes is Old Covenant; New Covenant is tithes.” Who said that? Did Abraham pay tithes before being circumcised or after being circumcised? Tell me. Before being circumcised. It happened in *Genesis 15*. He got circumcised in *Genesis 17*. *Abraham believed in God and it was credited unto him as righteousness* before being circumcised or after being circumcised? Before being circumcised. And he received circumcision as a sign, as we have heard. So, tithes were given before circumcision or after circumcision? Are we circumcised? No. So, do we have to pay tithes? Yes. Because it was before the law. People don’t know their Scripture.

So many Pastors don’t pay tithes. My father-in-law, he works in the village ministry. He says, “Vijay, so many village Pastors are poor. Do you know, Vijay? They do not pay their tithes. They don’t pay. Not that they don’t have money. God is not asking them to give money. Let’s say they get 10 bags of rice from their farm. Can’t they give one bag of rice to the Church? I have to teach them and they are perpetually in debt and in need. Do you know why? Because they do not pay their tithes.” It’s amazing. Look at the standard of God.

¹² ***And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?***

In other words, “I don’t believe you with property. I can’t trust you.” Many of us borrow bikes of other brothers – cars, bikes. Shibu taught me several lessons. One of the lessons he taught me that, sometimes, I don’t... I’m ashamed. I can’t lie. I remember when he came over to my home. I took him to Pastor James’ place. We had lunch. We were supposed to go out shopping. Those days, I didn’t have a bike. So, Pastor looked at me and asked, “Vijay, how are you going?” I said, “Pastor, I think we will take a bus.” Pastor said, “Take my bike and go.” So, we took Pastor’s bike and Shibu and I went all over Hyderabad. After the whole thing was over, Shibu asked, “Vijay, when are you returning the bike?” I said, “Shibu anna, after we are done, tomorrow morning, I will return.” “Come here. Let me take you to the petrol bunk.” He took me to the petrol bunk; he opened the tank and he said, “Full tank.” He said, “Vijay, never ever take advantage of another brother’s property.” He used it and he was putting the petrol till it came out and he said, “Stop it now.” Pastor, possibly, doesn’t know it but those days, I learnt a lesson. Sometimes, I get so guilty when I use somebody else’s property and I don’t fill in the gas, I feel so guilty. I say, “Sorry.” If it was mine, would I not fill it up? How would I take care of it? So many of us borrow bikes and somebody else’s property. The other day, my landlord came to renew my contract. He was examining the home. I told him, “If you think that certain things are not right, I’ll repair it.” I told him, “I will treat your home as my own. Whatever repair, I will do.” He can trust me. My landlord trusts me. Actually, whenever he goes out of town; I think he is one of the scariest landlords, actually. Whenever he goes out of town, he says, “Vijay, hold fort.” He gives the keys of his apartments. He trusts me with his home, with his property. Can you be trustworthy? Go to your offices. How many of you are careful with the resources that you use in your offices, the computers that you use, the laptops that you use? When I was graduating, I had to return all the equipment back and one of the laptops had its battery messed up. I replaced the battery. I replaced everything and gave it back to my boss. They should never say, “These Christians are crooks.” Never. Are you careful with somebody else’s resources? Are you really careful when you use somebody else’s resources? Or are you sneaky? Can Jesus believe you? Does Jesus believe in you?

Little things. Coming to Church on time. How many of us really take that to heart? The Pharisees were upset.

John 16:14-15

¹⁴ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.¹⁵ He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.

In other words, “You are people who compare yourselves with others. Who is your standard? Is it Me or somebody else?” That’s what it says in 2 Corinthians 12, “Those who compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. They are fools,” in other words. John 12;

John 12:42-43

⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Do you see that? That’s their standard. It’s not God; it’s men. John 5:44, Jesus says,

John 5:44

⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

You see? So, when you call God ‘good’, does He say, “I believe you?”

Coming back now to the young man’s story in Mark 10. Let’s wrap it up in a few minutes.

Mark 10:19

¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”

Think about it; it never happened. One preacher was saying; it never happened to me. Think about it; after the Service gets over, there is one guy; for example, let’s say, Akshath comes running to me, “Good Pastor, that was a great message. What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” I would look at him and say, “What a genuine man of God!” Jesus, “I don’t believe you.” Jesus will not get fooled with flattery. It never happened to me. Think about it if it happens here in this congregation. One guy comes and says, “What shall I do to inherit?” It never happened to me, actually. I’m sure it will not happen to many other preachers also. “Oh, what shall I do?” It’s very fervent. This guy is running towards. He is bowing before Him. Jesus says, “Keep the Commandments.” Think about it – murder, adultery, stealing, false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and your mother. I mean, the most difficult is – honor your father and mother. Obedience is tested when you are asked to obey the tough commandments. Let’s say Hrishu tells Nathanael, “We are going to school. Nathanael, when we are going to school, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not commit murder.” So, he goes to school and comes back and says, “Papa, I did not steal; I did not commit adultery; I did not murder,” would Hrishu say, “Fantastic son”? No, he would not say that. He would say, “Nathanael, don’t stay late in school; don’t play for too long; come back home early.” And if he does that, then he is really obedient. But this guy, you see the impeccable nature of this guy, he honored his father and his mother and Jesus looked at him and He loved him.

Mark 10:20

²⁰ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”

And I will tell you something; there is one thing in each one of us that God is pointing today. One thing. You lack one thing. That one thing may be that you took money from somebody and you conveniently forgot. I know people in the Church who are so sneaky that they borrow the money and they act as if they are strangers. They will come and stand before you; they will smile; they will give you coffee; but they will never talk about the money that they have to return. Have you seen such people? They will never talk. Very nicely, they will beat around the bush and they will do small talk but I’m asking you

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especially today, just before God, have you taken money from somebody and have you conveniently forgotten? Have you offended somebody and you have not even asked for forgiveness? You have come to Church and have you even put your tithes and offerings? One thing. Always, one thing God will always point out and I believe that whenever you come to Church, God will look at that one thing and will say, "One thing you lack." What is that?

Mark 10:21-22

²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Matthew 19:23-25

²³ And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

Is Jesus saying, "I'm not talking about salvation here. I'm only talking about rewards"? No, Jesus is saying, "This is about salvation." You know what He is saying? "That one thing can put you out of Heaven. You can be an impeccable guy of impeccable character but there is one thing that will take you out. That one thing." Look at what it says in *1 Corinthians 6:9-10*,

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

People who watch pornography – adultery. People who are greedy, revilers, swindlers, they will not inherit the Kingdom of God. And He says,

¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

One thing. Today, this morning, God is possibly looking at your hearts and He is saying, "I am looking at one thing in your lives. One thing that will become a stumbling block." It's amazing in the Book of Ezekiel; it says, "If a righteous man sins, even if there is one sin that he commits, all the righteousness that he has done will not be done against him and the sin that he has committed, he will die because of that." One thing that will keep him out of heaven.

And this morning, even as we come to the table, let's ask God. There was this one guy at the last Passover where Jesus was celebrating with His disciples and Jesus wanted to trust Himself with everybody and He washed the feet of His disciples and this is what happens *John 13*;

John 13:17-27

¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. ¹⁸ "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned^[a] against me.'^[b] ¹⁹ "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." ²¹ After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." ²² His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

You know what He was actually telling John? "John, I still believe you." You know what Simon thinks in his heart?

²⁷ *As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.*

And then, you know the story. The question, therefore, today, this morning, Jesus is asking us: does He believe in me? Yes, we all believe in Jesus but does Jesus believe in us? We need to judge ourselves constantly? Are there areas in our lives where we are sneaking and we are hiding, running away, trying to cover it up with a lot of religion? God is pointing out saying, "That one thing," and we are not putting that away. Even as we prepare ourselves this morning, I request the Worship Team; Pastor James, if you can come and lead us in Communion.

Sometimes, we forget the seriousness of eternity. One day, you will realize – nothing else matters other than your salvation. Even if you lose everything else on earth and you are secure in your salvation, you still haven't lost anything. Even if you have gained everything on earth and lost your salvation, you have lost everything. There is something that we need to be absolutely sure of. There is this false doctrine that has floated around for a long time which says, "Once saved, always saved," which is not true. You go through Scripture, it is not true. You have to keep on walking, growing in your salvation. How do you know? How do you know you are saved? How do you know your baby is alive? The first thing he used was that craving for milk. Like Pastor Vijay was sharing, I remember the day I got saved. When I got saved, I did not have a Bible. We had a Bible in the home which was kept in a very highly exalted place but never read. It's with me now because nobody else in the family needs it. So, I have it as a relic. It's a Catholic version. So, you will see the date on it; it was presented to my father when he got married. So, it's 1959. It is written on that but I never read it. I was very careful to avoid it all the days when I was not saved but when I got saved, I did not have a Bible but the EU library had a Good News Bible. So, I went to the EU library and borrowed the Good News Bible and that's, like him, I read for days without end. The question is: do you crave for milk? Like we keep hearing that same thing, just because you sit in the garage doesn't make you a car. Just because you sat in a Church for 10 years, it doesn't make you a believer. There are signs for a believer.

Can all of you look at me and smile where I see your teeth? Show me your teeth, all of you. Please show me your teeth. Oh, you all have teeth? So, you were not supposed to continue in a diet of milk. You are supposed to eat meat. If God intended man to live on milk alone, you would just have gums and not teeth, right? If God wanted us only to live on milk, He wouldn't have given us teeth; gums would have been enough. You don't need teeth for milk. Teeth are for meat. So, if you are still drinking the milk of God's Word, there is something really problematic with you. You should come to LHL and join there because we have 5-6 kids who are only on a diet of milk and they are not given through their mouth; it is injected into their sides, straight into the stomach because they cannot tolerate anything else. Understand salvation. Be very serious about it because there are tens and millions sitting in Churches on a diet of milk for their whole life. It's a sign you are not saved. If you are living on milk all your life, that means you are not saved. You just got religion. You are not saved. Like I said, the twinkling of an eye, when death comes in, that's not the time to make up your mind and to be sure. God gives us, at this time, when we are living, to be very sure that we know we are saved; you know you are graduating in your salvation; you are moving from milk to semi-solids, to meat. And even meat doesn't satisfy you; you want more and more tougher meat because you know your soul cannot be fed with that old diet anymore. That is why the second generation, when they entered into the Promised Land and they were circumcised, they ate the barley and the corn of that land because manna wouldn't satisfy their soul anymore. Manna had kept them healthy. Manna had kept them strong. Manna had nourished their soul in the wilderness but not in the Promised Land. There was a different diet for them in the Promised Land. So, get these things very clear because that's how you know you are saved because there is a hunger; there is a craving. That's why we all listen to Joel Osteen years ago. If you are still listening to Joel Osteen, maybe you need to get a spiritual checkup. That is not even milk; that is watered down milk. So, even the preachers you hear, I'm talking about outside the Church; you should listen is changing. Because inside, your soul is changing. It is not satisfied with that old milk anymore. You are graduating. That is how you know you are growing but that alone isn't enough. Just because you eat food, that doesn't mean you are growing. The next thing Pastor said, "You don't practice sin anymore." You sin; you may fall occasionally but you are not on this practice of the same sin. If you are continuing in that, Scripture says, "Anyone who is born of God does not practice sin because sin cannot have dominion over you." It cannot have dominion over you because you are no longer under the law; you are under grace and sin cannot have dominion over you. That's how you know. Because there are mockers and scoffers in every Church; not just in this Church; every Church; who will make these random statements like, "Who told you if you smoke pot, you will go to hell?" I tell you – if you keep on smoking pot, drinking alcohol, you will go to hell because Scripture says, "There is no place for drunkards in Heaven." There is no place for them in Heaven. Heaven is a holy place. Like I said, Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared set of people. That's why God says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." You know what He was saying in

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simple English? If you take care of the inside, I will take care of the outside. He says, “People are so worried about the outside.” He says, “You can’t change your outside; I can; but there is one thing you can do – you can take care of the inside. If you take care of the inside, I will take care of all those things that you are worried about in the outside; but if you don’t take care of the inside, ultimately, you will end up with neither the inside nor the outside.” Then, your attitude, Scripture says; all those who are born of God, they love. They are fighting this thing about how to love their brother and how to love their sister. They constantly fight the resentment, the jealousy, the pride, the anger; they are constantly fighting, saying that, “I will not allow these things to stop me from loving my brother.” Much of His parables were connected with that.

There’s another one which Pastor Vijay didn’t have the time – the final thing in *1 John*, Scripture says, “*Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world.*” The world doesn’t overcome you; you overcome the world and you realize – as days, weeks and months go by, the world has very little effect on you. That’s not enough to be a testimony; you also realize you have an effect on the world. It’s not enough because we are not called to be sadhus sitting in Himalayas. No. “The world has no effect on me.” No, God says, “I have sent you right into the world where the world is not able to say ‘you have no effect on me’.” Daniel and Joseph effected the entire empire but they refused to let the empire affect them. That’s what God is talking about – a generation who will arise, who will affect their world. That’s what salvation is because what God has put into us is His very Spirit and the Spirit will always have a witness. What He put into us is not something negligible; He put into us His very Spirit. We are born of His Spirit and when Jesus sends His disciples, breathing over them, what does He say? “As the Father sent Me, I send you.” Same. No difference here. I was born of the Spirit; you are born of the Spirit. I was filled in the Spirit. You, too, wait and get filled in the Spirit.” And He says, “Go and turn the world upside down.” And you should be turning your little classrooms, your colleges, your offices; you should be impacting them and you can. That’s what salvation is. So, this morning, as we come to the Table, the Table that brings healing, that brings life. Prepare your hearts because even this; you knew first Sunday; today is the 1st, first Sunday, if you are planning to partake at the Lord’s table, you come prepared. If you come prepared, it brings healing; it brings strength. Scripture says, “It brings an awakening in your Spirit,” because He says, “many people who partook of it without being prepared, they are weak, they are sick and they have fallen asleep.” So, if you come prepared and partake of it, you become strong; you received healing and there is an awakening in your spirit. So, don’t come being negative; come with positivity, “Lord, I have come prepared and I believe what Your Word says. I came sick in the body but I believe this will bring healing for me. I was a little asleep last week in my spirit and I believe there is going to be a quickening in my inner man. I was a little weak, Lord; but I believe I will be strong because these very emblems represent Your Body and Your Blood. I believe.” Because anyone who comes to God must believe that He is. So, let’s go as a prepared set of people to the table.

Communion Song: Amazing Love

Shall we stand? This morning, this first Sunday, the seventh month, we have heard His Word. We’ve been hearing His Word for so many weeks and months. It’s a good fight. The destruction at the building site itself is a sign of the construction that is taking place. If God is destroying things in your life, it’s because He is building something. It’s a sign of salvation. The Church at Ephesus, Jesus said, “Repent and come back to your first love,” because love is a sign of salvation. And He says, “If you do not, I will come and remove that lamp.” Because we have to fight this salvation out till the very end. Church at Pergamum, He said, “Be faithful even unto death. I’m not going to rescue you from this situation. You need to be faithful till the very end.” The Church at Sardis, He said, “There are very few among you whose clothes are not soiled and they shall walk with Me and I will give them robes of righteousness and I will never blot their names off.” Go through tonight; go through the seven letters. Jesus Himself spoke through John to us and we will realize – there is nothing more important in life than our salvation and be continuously working on it. I promise you, God will work the rest out. We work it in; He works it out. The salvation of God touches every facet of your life. That’s why we tell young people – it’s not your marks; it’s how you study that matters to God. It’s how you study. That’s all God is looking for because those who are saved and are walking in their salvation, they are very faithful in how they study. That’s all God is looking for. The world needs marks; God needs character. The Kingdom of God, one day, we will see, is full of people who allowed God’s character to be built in them. So, never stop fighting that fight because it is a good fight. And at the end, we should be able to say, “I’ve kept my faith.”

Closing Prayer:

Father, this morning, we just come to You. First day of the seventh month. We just thank You, Lord. Help us to see through Your eyes that the struggles we face are part of that fight. Every one of us. Everyone, I pray, Father, are able to see those

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struggles have a spiritual origin because there is a battle for our souls. There is an enemy who is after the souls of Your children. There is an enemy who is fighting for the souls of those who are saved so that they do not progress. There is a battle over the marriages in this Church. There is a battle over the children in this Church. There is a battle over the jobs, the workplaces, where Your children work. There is a battle over the testimony of Your children as students. There is a battle but we are not alone in this battle. You never told us to fight this battle in our strength. You told us to fight this in Your power, in Your ways. And I pray, this seventh month, we will taste victory. Everyone. Even when they fall, they will fall only to rise because Your Word says, "The righteous man will fall seven times but every time, he will rise." He will not lie there, wallowing in our sin, in our self-pity and our misery. But we will rise up because You rose. We will rise. Because You spoke over our lives, "More than conquerors." And I speak over Your children, Your people today, "More than conquerors." Blessed to be a blessing. Saved and working out our salvation. Justified; yet, being sanctified. Fearful; yet, fearless. Weak; yet, strong. Life a of a believer is a contradiction in itself, Lord. The world will not understand but we see how You make a people who are not a people, the very people of God; how You make a nation that was a nation of slaves and lead them into the Promised Land. Yes, Lord. We were slaves to sin one day. Today, You call us the children of the Living God with dominion over sin, dominion over the old slave masters. "For, behold, I give you power over all the power of the enemy. You shall trample upon snakes and scorpions and they shall, by no means, harm you." For in a very short while, the God of peace shall trample satan under Your feet. These are promises. We have dominion not only over sin; we have dominion over the old slave masters. Help us to see that we don't flee before the devil; the devil flees before us. The world doesn't impact us but we are sent out to impact this world. Even the youngest will impact the world that even when our babies will taken out, people will see the hand of God upon our babies – set apart. I commit Your Church into Thy hands, Lord. May Your hands rest upon everyone. The greater their struggle, I pray, the more they will experience Your power. The greater their weakness, the more they experience Your strength. And those who are practicing sin, I pray there would be a churning inside of them. I pray that You would make them restless, whether young or old; whether it is a substance or whether it is pride in the inner man. Let there be a churning inside. Let them not rest in their sin. Let them be restless in their sin. Until they vomit it out. Go before us, Lord. We can't walk alone. If You are not before us, we are without direction. Go before us and help us to keep our eyes closely, eye on You that we tread the steps You have taken so that we know there is no shadow of turning. Go before us. Strengthen us. Empower us. Heal us. Cover us. Protect us and breath Your love into our hearts, into our lives, into our homes and then, through us, into every place You take us, You send us. The love of God may be manifested abroad through us, Lord. Thank You, Lord. Let there be a breakthrough on the lives of people who are waiting for jobs, for a breakthrough in their homes, in their families and in their relationships. Let this be a month of breakthroughs, Lord. Baal Perizim, break through for us. God of restoration, restore what the thief has stolen. By faith, Father, now, we lift up holy hands. We bless Your holy Name. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen.