

# The Way Forward for Us as a Church

by Santosh Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of undistracted devotion to the Lord, growing in humility and faith, and fostering fervent love for one another within the church community. It highlights the need to set aside intellectual pride, seek revelation from God's Word, and focus on genuine, sacrificial love for fellow believers.*

**Scripture:** Romans 1:16, Habakkuk 2:3, Romans 12:9, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 Peter 4:7

**Topics:** "Undistracted Devotion", "Fervent Love in Community"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I'd like to speak today on what I, the Lord's laid on my heart as the way forward for us as a church, the road ahead for us as a church. And children I hope to speak as simply as possible in a way that you all can understand as well. I always try to do that.

I think one of the things I love about our church is we try to speak as simply as possible. For me that's a struggle. I'm honestly a little too educated to be used by the Lord, by God, and I have to forsake a lot of that intellectual ability I might have that is useful in the world for our jobs, but I have to set that aside whenever I seek to get revelation from God's Word.

I have to set that aside whenever I speak to preach, seek to preach God's Word. I can't bring, I dare not bring any intellect into the kingdom of God. The moment I try, God will hide things from me.

You know that there are things that God has hidden. Can you imagine that one of your children, you play hide-and-seek and they try to find something, and you as the adult, every time a child gets near something you hide it somewhere else without their knowing it. You think that's mean? It's actually the love of God that hides things.

Maybe I should begin there. Matthew chapter 11. He's known as a God who hides himself also, even in the Old Testament.

Why would God want to hide himself? Why wouldn't God just proclaim a banner in the heavens that says Jesus is the true God, believe in Him. Why doesn't He manifest Himself plainly in physical ways so that everybody would believe in Him. Nobody would go to hell.

God's ways are not our ways. He hides Himself. Because if He didn't hide Himself, it would be our knowledge of Him based on our own sight.

Our eyes, our eyes will have seen Him in some physical way and we can take credit for it. Our minds will have comprehended Him, understood Him in some way that we can take credit for. But when God hides Himself so that all my ability, all my effort, all my study of God's Word and applying of my intellect and listening to this message and listening to that message and looking up in the concordance and studying this and studying the Greek and the Hebrew and all of that in my self-promoting way comes to nothing.

And I picture it like this, that let's say I had two children. It's an imaginary story, not really true, an imaginary story. I had two children.

One is an 18-year-old, let's say, that's full of themselves and full of their own ability and I've got an 18-month-old and they're both on a treasure hunt in the house. And because the 18-year-old thinks, I'm going to get this, that 18-month-old, he's not going to get it. Me, 18-year-old, I'm going to get it.

I'm smart. I finished high school. And every time they get near the treasure, I go and hide it somewhere else without their knowing it.

But I call the 18-month-old and say, here, here it is. This is what God does. He hides it from those who are proud of their ability.

And you wonder why so many who spend so much time studying God's Word, going to seminaries and applying and applying and applying, like Paul himself. But there was something about Paul. There was something about the sincerity of Paul that God saw that Jesus said, I'm going to blind you on the road to Damascus and turn you from an 18-year-old to a blind 18-month-old.

Imagine if I could take that 18-year-old and blindfold him now. And now they lose their ability, their intellect and their strength, their self-confidence is broken. They can't even see anything.

They're feeling their way. And then I take that child by the hand and say, here's the treasure. Matthew 11, Jesus said, verse 25, at that time, Jesus said, I praise you, Father.

See, Jesus came from heaven. See, he understood exactly what heaven was really like. And when he came from heaven down to this earth and saw from an earthly perspective how the Father hides these things from all those intellectual seminarians and other people proud of their ability, he says, I praise you.

This is a taste of heaven. There will be no intellectuals in heaven because God will have hidden the truths from them. I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you with all your wisdom, being the Lord of heaven and earth, you who understand how everything is supposed to work, know that the right thing to do is to hide these things from the wise and the intelligent.

And you've revealed them to 18-month-olds. You've hidden them from 18-year-olds or 28-year-olds, 38-year-olds. And you reveal them to 18-month-olds.

That's why Jesus said, unless you become like a little child, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. So pray for me. Pray for us whenever we speak.

I tell you, brothers and sisters, when you pray for us, there's one thing you can really pray for us consistently. Any one of us who get up and speak, teach God's word. Pray that it will be simple, that it won't be fancy, impressive.

I won't have big words that you'll go away thinking, man, what an intellectual person or anything like that. That I will set aside all that knowledge of English that I have and the desire to be impressive to people and present it simply in a way that the intellectuals will mock. What kind of a message is that? Fit for a six-year-old.

And I say, yes, Lord, I want it to be fit for a five-year-old next time. We're going the other way from the world. The world and including worldly churches, Christendom, that's seeking to be more and more attractive and impressive to the world and to people of the world.

We're seeking to go the other way. And my dear family, this is the only way to build a church. That God can be so pleased with the simplicity and the nothingness and the weakness of us that we're forsaking the intellectuality, the big earthly wisdom.

And he says, that's a church that I can send my people to. And may we always be a church that we're not the ones drawing people, but God himself is, supernaturally. Where he sees these are my people who trust, who have no confidence in themselves, no confidence in their ability, nothing impressive that they can boast about.

Let me find a miraculous way to bring my people who are hungering for the same life, who want a life that's not impressive to the world, but is pleasing to Jesus Christ. And hasn't he done that? I think I look around at your faces and even think of those who aren't here and think how supernaturally God brought you here. We didn't seek some marketing program.

We didn't make our website fancy and all that. We didn't, you know, transform this building to be some cool hip place that you come to. We're into simplicity.

We're into, yeah, we have comforts. We have decent chairs to sit on, but we're not trying to be the place that is attracting people because of something outward, but a place where God sees our faithfulness in secret. And he says, these are people that I can bring my people to, whether it's online or here in person.

So the road ahead for us as a church, I believe first of all, we must not be distracted from devotion to the Lord. We must not be distracted from devotion to the Lord. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 7. I see it in my own life, dear brothers and sisters.

And if you'll look carefully, I believe you'll see it in your own life as well. It's very easy for us when things are going well as a church and we've got meetings and we've got a good system of things where we've got our Sunday meetings and we've got our Wednesday meetings. We've got prayer meetings and we've got interactions.

We've got interactions that happen through contact or phone during the week and all these things. In the midst of all of that, and I believe we get good teaching. We have conferences where people come and are blessed here.

We pack this place up. We have people that watch us online every Sunday, want to join us during the week. In the midst of all of that, especially local church, don't be distracted from devotion to Jesus.

Things will fall apart. Things have already fallen apart if we have been distracted from devotion to Jesus. In the midst of all the things that are going on in your workplace or in your home, all the ambitions and goals you have for your children and your family and all of that.

Don't be distracted from devotion to Jesus. 1st Corinthians 7 we read in verse 32. He's actually talking about whether it's good to be married or not.

Now God called Paul to be unmarried. That was His calling, a very specific calling that He gave Paul like He gave Jesus. The calling for Jesus was to be unmarried.

The calling for Paul was to be unmarried. That probably is not the calling for most of us. I really believe that.

I don't believe it's God's calling for most of us to be unmarried. But the principle of the truth here is that even as married couples and as parents of children, we must live in such a way when it comes to devotion to the Lord as if we are unmarried. And He says that it's better not to marry because then you can be 100% devoted to the Lord.

100% devoted to the Lord. I want you to be free, verse 32, from concern. I want you to be free from distraction, you can say.

That's the meaning of that word concern. There's something else that would take up your mind and your thoughts and your affection from Jesus Christ Himself. So He says, one who is unmarried is taken up with the things of the Lord, concerned about the things of the Lord, how He may please the Lord.

That's 100% all. If you're unmarried, you young people, young teenagers and children, you have a tremendous blessing in the fact that you're not married. I know many of you, as you get a little older, you think, I can't wait to be married as well.

But you know, there are, there's something precious about your unmarried years that most single people miss out on because they have such a desire to be married. In your unmarried years, there's a wonderful testimony that we're given here is that if you're single, you can be 100% devoted to the Lord. It's easier to do that when you're single.

Now you may think, well, it's so difficult. I get lonely at times and I'm all by myself and nobody understands my thoughts. If only I had a wife or a husband that I could pour out my heart to, wouldn't it be so much easier? And I want you to know the truth from God's Word.

That's a lie of the devil. God wants you, Jesus wants you in those times of loneliness, to go to Him, to pour out your heart to Him, where you can be 100% devoted to Him. We are not waiting to have an earthly companion, necessarily.

But you're so devoted to Him, you've known Jesus as the friend above all friends. One who is unmarried is taken up with the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But, verse 33, one who is married is taken up about the things of the world, how he may please his wife or she may please her husband.

And again, marriage is of the Lord. God instituted marriage. And it's God's will for, I believe, most, if not all of us listening to this, to be married.

God may call very specific ones to be unmarried. But, so then what is the point? If he's saying, well, the married one is taken up with the things of the Lord, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided, as it were. I believe what Paul is talking about here is the natural approach to marriage, which is that I haven't gone into marriage as a disciple.

What did Jesus say a disciple must be? Luke chapter 14. Let's keep a finger in 1 Corinthians 7. I'll come back, come back there. Luke 14, Jesus said, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his husband or wife, I'm skipping over some of that father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes, even his own life.

If somebody doesn't hate his wife, if somebody doesn't hate her husband, you cannot be my disciple. That's the condition of discipleship. So going back to 1 Corinthians 7, if you are married, but you're not in that marriage as a disciple of Jesus, who is 100% devoted to Jesus completely, then your interests are divided.

You're thinking about how to make my wife happy, how to make my husband happy, how to have a good little life here on this earth in my marriage, and also be devoted to the Lord. This divided life where I'm trying to please my wife or my husband and please the Lord is not Christianity. Christianity is 100% devotion to Jesus, devoted to Jesus, where I honestly have to say to my wife, I don't have room in my heart for you because I've given my heart completely to Jesus.

And out of that, I give my wife a heart that's full of Jesus. And I come to my wife and I say, honey, my heart is full of Jesus. Now you can have it.

If you want any part of my heart that's outside of Jesus, you can't have it. And likewise, if wives can say to their husbands, I've given my heart completely to Jesus, not 90% of Jesus, 10% to you spouse or 99% of Jesus, 1%. Is that the marriage you are living? Husbands and wives, 99% for Jesus, 1% for my wife, 1% for my husband.

That's not Christianity. True Christianity is 100% to Jesus and I give my wife, give your husband a 100% Jesus owned heart. That is the only way to have a godly marriage.

Going back to 1st Corinthians 7, the middle of verse 34, he continues, the woman who is unmarried and the virgin is concerned or taken up with the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and spirit, but one who is married is taken up about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. There's a little phrase in there that gives us the clue of what it means to be 100% devoted to Jesus and then give my spouse that 100% devoted heart, devoted to Jesus heart is this, how to be holy in body and spirit, preserve holiness in body and spirit. In your body that includes your soul, in your mind, your thoughts, be holy, be holy men, take it seriously, be holy, let there be no trace of unholiness or impurity in body or in spirit in us, wives likewise.

This I say for your own benefit, not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and look, why was Paul saying all of this? He says, I want you to be taken up secure, secure means safe, security, they talk about it with banks, they talk about it with homes, they talk about it with software, secure. Everybody's talking about security these days, you can have security, you can have security, you know what Paul was interested in? I want to make sure that you wrap up this thing and you don't lose sight

of that, keep it safe, maybe other things will come and go, ministry, that may come and go, a local church, that may come and go, but don't let anybody rob this from you, keep this secure. Secure what? Undistracted devotion to the Lord, keep it safe, brothers and sisters, keep it safe, keep your devotion to the Lord safe and secure, devotion to the Lord.

If you go back a few verses, you'll see that, what does this actually mean? Let's go back to verse 29. This I say, brethren, the time has been shortened. Did you know that time has been shortened? I don't know what that actually means.

Like, I know that before the foundations of the world, the father planned out time and he decided the time of Christ's return, Jesus is coming back at a specific time, but when it says it's been shortened, I don't know, I just think it means it's sooner than you think it is. It's really short. And this was written 2,000 years ago, when Paul said, the time is short, Jesus is coming back soon, be ready.

So, what should we do, if you really believe that Jesus is coming, you see what's going on in the Middle East, people say, is Jesus going to come soon? I don't know, I don't need to read the news to know that Jesus is coming very soon. Honestly, I have 1 Corinthians 7 verse 29 in my Bible, as did you, and that's been there for 2,000 years. The time has been shortened.

You don't have to say, oh wow, the battle, the war, World War III, Jesus, I better get my act together. Really? I think if it took what's happening in Palestine to get my act together, you're probably lost already. I don't know if you will be in eternity with Christ, because you take Fox News and CNN's word over God's word.

It was here all along, the time has been shortened. So that, verse 29, from now on, those who have wives should be as though they had none. They're not 99% for God and 1% for your wife.

100% for God, and giving your spouse that 100% for God heart. Those who had wives should be as though they had none. Those who wept, who weep, as though they did not weep.

Are you sad over something on this earth? Is there some loss you've experienced? Wake up! That thing that you lost here on this earth, that opportunity that you don't have, it's not going to matter in a matter of minutes when Christ comes. Don't weep for the things of this earth. Those who weep, as though they did not weep.

Those who rejoice, are you excited about some extra gain you have on this earth, a little bit more money that you got, a promotion, you're making a little bit more money, you have a bigger house or a better car or something like that, and you rejoice over that? Don't rejoice! Those who buy, as though they did not possess. Did you buy something new? Don't possess it. What does that mean? If you bought it, let the Lord take it away from you in a moment.

You bought it, yes, you spent a lot of money to get it, the Lord took it away, let it go, because in a matter of seconds, from eternity's perspective, it's not going to matter whether you had that or not. Did you start a new job or you got this other promotion or something else, a little bit more money? Don't possess it! And those who use the world as though they did not make full use of it. I want it to be written over my tombstone.

If you guys are around after I die, please write on my tombstone, Santosh did not make full use of this world. There's so much more he could have done with the world. He could have made a little bit more

money.

He could have had a bigger this and a better that. He didn't make full use of the world. It's in your Bible, isn't it? Those who use the world as though they did not make full use of it.

That means what? There will be an opportunity in your workplace to make a little bit more money and to rise up a little bit more in your career. But you will know that that will come at the expense of the Kingdom of God. In your own marriage, first of all, perhaps, or in your own home, or in how the Lord wants to use you in the church to be a servant to others.

You'll say, I can take that, a little bit more, and I'll give God what's left over after I retire. Those who use the world, who use their jobs as though they did not make full use of their jobs. Those who use their money as though they did not make full use of it.

Why? Because there's something else I'm taking up with. For the form of this world is passing away. The form of this world is passing away.

So that means I don't have time to waste. I deal sparingly with what the world thrusts on me. That means if the world gives me this opportunity, I'm saying, yeah, that's okay.

It's good to have, but you know, I can live without it. It's okay. Because I've got something else that I'm more interested in.

This ought to build in our hearts, dear brothers and sisters, a holy desperation for the things of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. And be watchful, be watchful. Don't let anything distract you from devotion to the Lord.

Don't let anything distract you from devotion to the Lord. What a wonderful testimony. Not just when I'm dead.

See, by then it's too late, right? Can the people in your workplace say, you know what, Santosh, he could do so much more in the workplace. He could be this. He could be more successful even.

He could make a little bit more money. He could, you know, give up something else. Why is he so taken up with this church thing? You know, he could give that up and make a little bit more money and make a better name for himself here on this earth.

But I don't know. Does your boss say, man, you're not living up to your potential? Now, I'm not talking about being lazy. Please understand that.

We must work hard. Our employers must know that we give them diligence, but they must also know, but you know what? When it comes to like, if I call him on a Sunday morning, he say, I'm sorry, there's something else I'm more taken up with. When I call him on a Wednesday evening to work late and say, sorry, I've got something else that's more important.

I'm taken up with this. Don't be legalistic about it. I know sometimes you might have to work late, but there must be a principle that guides our life.

That at the end of the day, there's nothing that comes ahead of the kingdom of God in my life. I'm not making full use of this earth. I could.

Is it really true, brothers, sisters, that there's more you could do with the kingdom of this world, but you reject it because you know it'll take away from the kingdom of heaven. I hope it's true. Don't be distracted from devotion to the Lord.

If you go back to, let's look at a verse in Jeremiah chapter two, I read recently, which really blessed me. What are the things that will, I talked about how the attractions of this world and the success of this world can distract us. On the other side, there are also other things that can distract us.

And that is the lack of it, where I don't have something. And that lack, that desert place, as it were, I feel like I'm in a desert when it comes to the things of this world. I could have a better job or I like this or I'd like that other thing.

And I look at others that have those things. I think, oh, I wish I had that. If God has allowed you to be in a place of lack in some way, in a desert place in some way, that could be a distraction as well.

Look at what God describes his walk with Judah. Now the word of the Lord, verse one, Jeremiah two, verse one. The word of the Lord came to me saying, go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem saying, thus says the Lord.

I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth. I remember when we were, I think it's the living Bible, this is when we were newlyweds, Jesus is saying. When you were newly born again and you didn't have much, but you were so taken up with the fact that I'd forgiven your sins.

I'd cleansed you. I loved you. I lavished my love on you.

And we were like newlyweds. We were enough for each other. That's kind of like the father telling the prodigal son, I remember when you first came home, young man.

You'd wasted all your time in the world and you'd wasted my money and all that. But you came home and I threw a feast for you. And I remember the look in your eyes when you looked at me.

That look of gratitude, that look of love for me. And you were just happy to be at home. That's it.

Even if I hadn't thrown a feast, it would have been fine. And years have gone by, prodigal son, and now you've become an elder brother. Now you want something more from me.

I'm not enough for you, the father's saying. You've lost, you've left your first love. You've left the attitude you had when you came home and said, Father, just let me be among your hired servants.

But I said, no, you're more than that to me. You're my son. And I welcomed you home with a hug and a kiss.

And I put sandals on your feet and a ring on your finger. I put the best robe. I killed a fatted calf and rejoiced over you.

But now you want something else besides me. Now you want another fatted calf, perhaps. You want another robe.

And I am not enough for you. I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth. The love of your betrothals.

You're following after me in the wilderness through a desert place, through a land not sown. I missed that many times when I read this verse. What Jesus, what God was saying there to the people of Judah was, I remember when you and I were in such love with each other.

And you loved me. Now Jesus has always loved us with an everlasting love. But he's saying you, Judah, my loved, the object of my love.

I remember when you looked at me with such delight. I was enough for you. It's like Jesus is saying to us today.

I remember when I would look at you deep in your eyes and you would look at me deep in my eyes and that was enough. But now I find that you're asking me for this and you're asking me for that and you want something else earthly. And you're in a wilderness.

You're following after me in the wilderness where Jesus went through the wilderness and you saw the wilderness and you said, Jesus, I'm going to follow you. I don't care about the wilderness. I don't care about the land that's not sown where there's nothing to reap.

How will we eat? I don't know, Lord. There's nothing sown in this land, but I'm with you. I'll have you.

You'll be enough for me. As long as you're with me, I don't care. Wilderness, desert, whatever, mountainous region.

And God is saying, I remember the devotion of your youth. But today, you and I are walking through the wilderness and you're looking around you and you're thinking, man, there's nothing to eat over here. Why would you bring me to this place? Why have you left me here? And Jesus is there all along.

And he's saying, you're taken up with the fact that it's a wilderness now. I'm not enough for you. You've been distracted from me by the wilderness that we are in together.

Are you walking through a wilderness with Jesus? Some wilderness in your life, some emptiness, perhaps, some lack. Perhaps it's a healing that you're waiting for. Perhaps it's an opportunity you're waiting for.

Perhaps it's uncertainty. You don't know. You wish things could be different.

In the midst of that circumstance, in the midst of that wilderness, don't be distracted from devotion to Jesus. Verse 3, Israel was holy to the Lord. The first of his harvest, the delight of his eye.

Don't be distracted from devotion to the Lord. Let's turn to Luke chapter 7. This morning I was meditating on this and I got a picture of what our church meeting could be like. And I wonder, when you think about the road ahead for us as a church, what does it look like? What was it like when you came to this meeting this morning? Dear brothers, dear sisters, dear children even.

What was it like? I thought of it like this story of Simon the Pharisee. He invited Jesus to his house, just like we have invited Jesus to come to this meeting. But there were two key characters in that story besides Jesus and they represent to me two ways in which you can have a meeting that Jesus is present in.

Two ways in which we can have church meetings where Jesus is present. And this is the road ahead for us. You have a choice.

I hope and pray that RLCF will pick the right way. The way that we see here. You know the story? Verse 36, one of the Pharisees, his name was Simon as we know from later on, requested Jesus to dine with him.

And I imagine what it must have been like for Simon. Now Simon, I don't know if he was one of those Pharisees who condemned Jesus to death. I don't know why he invited Jesus.

I don't think he was there to just make fun of him. I think he thought, let me throw a distinguished party for this man Jesus. Let me throw a respectable banquet for Jesus.

Let's invite all these other important guests. Let's see if we can get some politicians to show up. Let's get somebody from Herod's Palace.

Let's get somebody from Pilate's Palace. Let's get distinguished guests. Let's invite a few of the other distinguished Pharisees.

Let's all sit down, have a banquet, and let's have Jesus come. Let's bring his disciples too. Is that the church meeting that we've been having? A respectable church? Important people sitting there? I hear many churches that brag, oh the mayor of our town comes to our church.

Or the governor attends our church. Or the president attends our church. I don't know if any of them will ever.

I would be afraid if any of them comes to our church. Because it's a different world system. Now again, we're not against anybody.

But that's definitely not something we would brag about. But that's what it was like for Simon. A distinguished party.

A distinguished meeting. And I pray that our meeting will never be such a distinguished, respectable, everything nice and orderly type of meeting where Jesus sits there. Maybe Jesus was sat there.

But there was somebody else who had a different type of meeting with Jesus. And that's the woman. And it says in verse 37.

There was a woman in the city who also planned a meeting with Jesus. She didn't have money. She didn't have a lot of money.

She didn't have a house in which to throw the big feast. She didn't have a lot of food. She didn't have any friends to invite.

But she had a bottle of perfume. That she spent everything that she had to get. There was one thing that mattered to her and that was Jesus himself.

It says this woman. It says she was a sinner. Verse 37.

When she learned that he was reclining at somebody else's house. I've thought about it like this. Here we are at RLCF.

We have a nice building. We have comfortable chairs to sit in. We have friends and family that we meet every Sunday.

But perhaps we've been organizing this meeting like Simon the Pharisee. A nice distinguished meeting. We come dressed up and look nice.

But the thing that I'm most worried about is how do I look for the meeting today? And who else is going to be there? Are my friends going to be there? Who else is coming to this meeting? Yeah I know Jesus is invited but who else? Who else? Jesus distracted devotion. It's not Jesus alone. See that woman she didn't care who else was at that meeting.

She didn't care oh the mayor is going to be there. I don't know. There's one person I care about.

Jesus. He's going to be there. That's why I want to go.

And I imagined a future RLCF. If we don't choose the right path. If we choose the path where we're distracted by so many other things.

And we've been distracted from devotion to Jesus. And we're continuing to have the meetings. And the children are here.

And everything else looks the same. And somebody comes and sits in the back. A stranger perhaps who's not invited to the meeting.

They aren't part of the church. They sit in the back and they're here for one reason. They want to meet with Jesus.

And they sit there and in the quietness of their heart. While we're all singing and sound so good singing. And while the message is going on.

This person, likely a woman. Pours out her heart to Jesus. And says Lord I'm a sinner.

But I just want to be devoted to you. And Jesus is with her. The road ahead for RLCF.

I believe we face a choice. Brothers and sisters. Whether we will just be a church that continues with meetings.

And continues with events. And going to the park when it's nice. And having meals here.

And the children have friends. And all of that. These things become organizations in a banquet.

We've lost sight of devotion to Jesus like this woman had. We don't need a building. RLCF, we don't need a building.

We don't need chairs. It doesn't matter who's here. Do you have such undistracted devotion to Jesus? That you're the only one that's left standing.

Everybody else is taken up with a banquet. But you're coming here and says Lord I'm here simply to be devoted to you. And I will be until the end of my life.

That's the person who represents RLCF I would say. What's RLCF? It's not a name. It's going to die.

If not when Jesus comes sometime before that. But may we imagine if the characteristic of this church is that 100% of the people here simply want Jesus. They don't care how things look.

They don't care how they look. They don't care how things sound. They don't care whether the heat's on or off.

It doesn't matter. Yeah we'll try to keep the heat at a comfortable temperature. But is Jesus here? And is that why you're here? This is the road ahead for us.

I tell you my brothers and sisters. I believe in all my heart that us elders. All four of us.

That's the way we want to go. 100%. I mean know it in my heart.

And I believe that for most of you. At least the core of this church. That's the way we're going.

And I hope all of us. 100% will go that way. I'm not looking to fill this room.

There are empty chairs here. Yes I'm not looking to fill that empty chair. I'll tell you that.

If God wants it. So be it. But I pray that every chair that's filled.

Is here filled for the right reason. Undistracted devotion to Jesus. That you simply hear.

Like this woman. Who learned that he was reclining at the table. In the Pharisees house.

She heard it. Oh Jesus is going to come to RLCF. Okay then I'm going to go there.

And I'm going to sit in the back. It says that she reclined behind him. Brought an alabaster vial of perfume.

And standing behind him at his feet. She wept. And wet his feet with her tears.

And kept wiping them with the hair of her head. And kissing his feet. And anointing him with the perfume.

Is that what you did this morning when you sang? I wish I could have preached this message first maybe. And then we had had a time of singing. Perhaps we would have sung differently.

I worship thee sweet will of God. And all thy ways adore. Ill that he blesses is my good.

And unless good is ill. God's will is sweetest to him when it triumphs at his cost. Have you pictured the woman with the alabaster perfume? Coming and pouring her perfume at Jesus feet.

Can you sing that way? May we. May we. May we.

At least from this day forward. If the music sounded too good. I fear brothers and sisters.

You know I lead singing quite often here. But my fear is that we sound too good sometimes. And we miss the woman at Jesus feet.

Pouring her bottle of perfume at his feet. That's what it's about. It's what it must always be about.

I fear that the sermon could sound too good even. Honestly. Somehow it's impressive that you're stirred up in your emotion.

But you miss devotion to Jesus. That is the goal. That's the goal.

May it be our goal as a church. And Jesus turned to Simon and said. Do you see this woman? Verse 44.

Luke 7.44. Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet. Is Jesus saying that to you today? I entered this room.

And you didn't give me water to drink. You didn't give Jesus something to drink today. And you gave me no water for my feet.

She has wet my feet with her tears. And wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss.

Did you give Jesus a kiss? A hug? An embrace this morning when you came? Or do you forget about him somehow? Or the brother that you haven't seen in a long time. Hi, bro. Give him a hug.

Did you give Jesus a hug this morning when you came and said. Lord, I'm here to meet with you. Maybe my best friend's not here.

Okay. But you're here. You gave me no kiss.

But she, since the time I came, has not ceased to kiss my feet. We've been here for an hour and 15 minutes. What's it been like? Has it been constantly kissing Jesus' feet? Lord, I want to.

When I say my memory verse, it's not to impress people. Or to show that I've got children. If you can learn this.

I praise God that you come up and say a memory verse. But what is it? It's a kiss on Jesus' feet. When we spend 25 minutes singing.

What is it? So that the harmonies all sound good. And the balance is all right. So that we're not sounding bad and horrible and distracted.

But what is it? It's a kiss on Jesus' feet. That's it. I mean, does it matter whether the.

It was her tears. She didn't even have water. So she cried at his feet and wet his feet with her tears.

How many tears does it take to get Jesus' feet wet? I think it's a stream of tears. You know, you don't have to fake tears. Some people can do it on wind.

They can cry and sway people emotionally through tears. Some people can do that. I'm not trying to do that.

I tell you, even as I sit here. And I'm saying things that I hadn't planned to say. Honestly, I want to be devoted to Jesus more.

I really do. And you did not anoint my head with oil. But she anointed my feet with perfume.

For this reason, I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven. Do you want to be forgiven of your sins? I tell you, my dear brother, dear sister. Maybe this past week has been a week of defeat for you.

You've been defeated in sins. Maybe you've been defeated in sin this past week. But I tell you, I'm quite sure this woman had lived a sinful life in the week building up to that.

But she said, Lord, is there hope for me? I'm going to come and just simply show you that there's a devotion to you I want to have. And Jesus said, this woman who sinned the entire week is forgiven. This moment, her sins are forgiven.

Do you want to leave this place forgiven? It's not just simply saying a prayer and just like, oh, Lord, forgive me. No, but do you want to be devoted to Jesus? Are you willing to make any sacrifice and give up every other ambition and desire to be devoted to Jesus? You will leave this place forgiven. Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven because she loved much.

He who is forgiven little loves little. He who is forgiven little is more interested that the music sounds good. And that who else is part of this church? And what friends do I have? What are we going to eat for lunch? And what conversation am I going to have? Who can I talk with at lunch? And all this stuff.

Those are the ones who are forgiven little. Oh, yeah, I sinned a little bit. But if you come here recognizing that you have sinned much, you've sinned much, you will love much.

He said to her, your sins have been forgiven. Verse 50, he said, your faith has saved you. Not only forgiveness, salvation.

Do you want both forgiveness and salvation? Come to Jesus with an undistracted devotion to him. The road ahead for us as a church. The second thing I want to say is that the road ahead for us as a church means that we are growing in humility and faith.

It's very important. Growing in humility and faith. Let me ask you an honest question as I'm asking myself.

Are you more dependent on God today than you were yesterday? Or since last week? This is faith. Faith very simply is dependence on God. It's not, oh, have you had a little bit more knowledge? Have you listened to all the daily devotions this last week and you've acquired a little bit more devotion? Please listen to those.

Those will help you. What? They will help you what? They will help you become more dependent on God. Are you more dependent on Jesus Christ today than you were last week? If not, I want to tell you, you'll fall away from this church.

Because I believe with all of my heart, my desire, our desire, the Lord's desire, not my desire. I'm just uniting myself with the Lord's desire. The Lord's desire is that this church, every individual member of that, is growing in faith.

This is the gospel. Romans chapter 1. Paul said in verse 16. Romans 1 verse 16.

Somebody asks you, what is the gospel? You should know it very clearly. Children, you should know it. Somebody asks you, what is the gospel? It's not Jesus died for my sins and I get to go to heaven.

No, no, no, no, no. Romans 1 verse 16. Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is a power.

A power that will save you if you believe, whether you're Jew, Greek, Jew or Greek. Because in the gospel, what you see is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. That means it's not just a starting faith that says, I believe in Jesus Christ.

Please forgive me for all my sins. Come into my heart. End of story.

No. This is the gospel. If you came to Jesus with so much faith on the first day when you were born again to trust Him completely to forgive your sins.

What should happen? The good news, that's what gospel means, is that the next day you have faith for more. And the next day you have faith for more. From faith to faith.

If you started with faith and then your faith stalled, as it were, stopped, stopped growing. That's not the gospel. We're here to preach the gospel.

The gospel is that your faith starts. In fact, the smallest amount of faith that you had was the day that you were born again. Do you believe that? I'm not teaching something new.

It's right here in Romans 1 verse 17 and 16 and 17. The smallest amount of faith I should have had was the day I was born again. If it hasn't been the case where you started with some amount of faith.

But along the way trials and tribulations have come. And the Christian life has become heavy. And now you have less faith.

You're trusting God less today than the day you were born again. I want to tell you, somebody has fooled you. It's not the gospel.

It's not good news. The good news is your faith can and must be bigger today than it ever was. And if you can be honest with yourself and say, Lord, that's not true.

I can think back on a time in my life five years ago when I had more faith than I did today. What's happened? I backslid. I've gone backwards, Lord.

And if you're going backwards from Christ, where are you going to end up? Far away from Him from all eternity. I'm not trying to condemn you. Please, let's take courage.

Let's be exhorted. The good news is from faith to faith. Growing in faith.

You know, this quote is from the book of Habakkuk. Let's turn there. Children, you should know where the book of Habakkuk is.

You walk backwards from the end of the Old Testament, Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, Zephaniah, and then Habakkuk. Habakkuk. Don't get to heaven and meet Habakkuk.

And he asks you, did you read my book? And you say, no, I didn't even know there was such a book. It's there, Habakkuk. Habakkuk should, you know, God used him for a reason.

Habakkuk chapter 2. Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 2. Then the Lord answered me and said, record the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run. And I want to skip over to verse 4. I'll come back to verse 3. And he says, the end of verse 4, the righteous will live by his faith. The righteous will live by his faith.

And Paul makes it clear. It's a living by faith, a faith that's growing. In fact, the literal word here is faithfulness, a faith that becomes full over time.

That's how the righteous will live. Have you been righteous this last week? It's not a matter of whether you always overcame in every situation or whether you fell in this area or fell in that area. No.

Are you depending on the Lord today? If your faith is more today than it was last week, you have actually grown in righteousness. That's it. If your faith, your dependence on God is more today, perhaps God used failure to accomplish it.

Yeah. Praise be his name. Now, failure is never honoring to God.

Sin is never. It's always a dishonor to God. But if through that sin, God was able to accomplish in you a greater dependence on him, a greater faith on him, then you've grown spiritually.

Don't let the devil fool you. Growing from faith to faith. This is righteousness.

This is how we thrive in our righteousness. But it goes on to say that the reason that the opposite of this faith to faith you read in the first part is pride. So in order for me to grow from faith to faith, it's not saying, well, I better work up more faith.

It's simply saying, Lord, I want to humble myself more. That's why I said that the way ahead for us as a church is growing in humility and faith. Humility and faith.

If you grow in humility, you're more humble today. The mark of that will be that you'll have more faith in God, more trust in him, more dependence on him and growing in righteousness. I want to say something very plainly because I believe it with all my heart and I use this as an acid test, a sure test.

If there's a lack of faith in your life today, dear brothers, dear sisters, children, please listen. If there's a lack of faith in your life today for something, maybe it's some circumstance or you're unable to trust God in a particular way. If there's a lack of faith in your life today, there's only one reason.

It's because you're proud. Let me say it again. If there's a lack of trust in God, complete trust in God, if there's a lack of it in your life, it's very simply because you're proud.

Don't say, well, I'm going through a hard time and yes, I want to have more faith. No, you need to be more humble. That's it.

Humility produces faith. Plain and simple. It's right here.

If there's a lack of dependence on God in your life, if there's a reason, if there's some area in which you're not trusting God today, very simply, it's because you're proud. I'm not pointing a finger at you. Please know I've been judging myself over and over again for the last few weeks.

Lord, why is it that I'm not trusting you in some area? The Lord said very plainly, Santos, you're still too proud. Say, Lord, I want to humble myself. Really? I think I'm humble, but you've shown me.

The proof is not in whether people think I'm humble. You all may think I'm humble. I don't know.

Maybe you think I'm proud. Please tell me if you think I'm proud. I want to know it so that I can be saved from it.

But if you think I'm humble, that matters nothing. The proof for me of whether I'm actually humble or not is whether I have faith in God more today. For that thing that's as yet unanswered.

For that situation that's as yet unsolved. Go back to verse 3. Because he says in verse 3, the vision that he says, record the vision, write it down so that the one who reads it will run. The vision is not for now.

It's for a later time, an appointed time. It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail even though it tarries. Even though there's a delay.

Wait for it. What's the mark of humility? I'm waiting on the Lord. I've asked Him for this.

I've asked Him for that. But I'm waiting on the Lord. I'm depending on Him more.

Why? Because I don't have such high thoughts. Do you know the mark of a hurried man? The mark of a proud man is his desire to see things happen quickly. Let me say it again.

The mark of a proud person is they want things done quickly. They want the Lord to answer quickly. Lord, I've been praying for one week.

I've been praying for one month. I've been praying for one year. How come I haven't done it, Lord? The Lord says, really? You think a year is such a long time? A day has a thousand years.

A thousand years is as a day. Time. I'm not limited by time.

Will you wait for it? Will you trust me? Will you depend on me? Will you be so humble as to depend on me until it is fulfilled? Though it tarries, wait for it, for it will certainly come. It will not delay. It changes our definition of delay.

Because I think God's delaying His answer. No, He's not. It will not delay is the word He wants you to hear this morning.

It will not delay. Wait on the Lord. So the characteristic of the church must be that the road ahead for us as a church, brothers and sisters, is this.

We're growing in humility. Growing in faith. The last thing I'll say is that the way ahead for us as a church is that we must grow in fervent love for one another.

Let's turn to Romans chapter 12. Fervent love. This is a word that you read in the Bible.

Fervent love for one another. How much do you love the other brothers and sisters at RLCF? If you're a member of this church, how much do you love them? Is it fervent? Is there passionate love for them? Where you're willing to make any sacrifice for them. You care about them.

You're interested in how they're doing. That's why we stick around for hours after our meetings. Why? We're not here just to sing together and listen to a message and all that.

Go our merry way. No, we have sacrificed something. We have a fervent love for each other that says I can't leave yet.

I haven't found out how you're doing. And I have a fervent love for you and I care about your spiritual welfare. And I want to perhaps spend some time praying for you and show you my fervent love.

Fervent love for one another. Romans 12 verse 9. He starts by saying let love be without hypocrisy. Don't just say you love the brothers and sisters in the church.

Let it be true. Prove it by your fervent love. Oh, I love you brother.

I love you sister. Good to see you. Love you.

Love you. We say that so flippantly, so easily. It slips off our tongues.

No, let love be without hypocrisy. If you say you're a member of this church, which means you're saying you love this church, show it. Abhor what is evil.

Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Giving preference to one another in honor.

Not lagging behind in diligence. Fervent in spirit serving the Lord. Fervent in spirit devoted to one another.

I want to tell you the way ahead for us at this church is devoted love for each other. Devoted love for each other. True devoted love.

Where you make sacrifices. Where you're not thinking of your own needs and your own preferences and your own desires. You're thinking of the needs of others.

Giving preference to one another in honor. What does that mean? Imagine if some famous person was here. These days the politicians of the world are mocked.

But let's say it was some famous sports personality. Somebody you respect a lot was here. Somebody that's famous in the eyes of the world and they were here.

Would that change the way you act? You're like, oh man, I want to give preference to that person. The famous person's here. Think about giving preference to one another in honor that way.

Who's the famous person that's here today? Your brother, your sister, that child. They're the important person. This is the way forward.

This is the way we're going, brothers and sisters. 1 Peter 1, he says similar words. Growing in fervent love for one another.

This is the road ahead for us as a church. 1 Peter 1, verse 22. Since you have an obedience to the truth, purified your souls of all this self-seeking and thinking only of what's good for me.

You purified it. God has removed all that attitude of only thinking about yourself. Since you have purified your souls, your souls for what purpose? For a sincere love, unhyprocritical.

That's the literal word there. Same thing that Paul says in Romans. Peter says here, let love be without hypocrisy.

You have purified your souls for what purpose? To have an unhyprocritical love for the brothers. Fervently love one another from the heart. That means be zealous.

Like think of ways in which you can love your brother, your sister more fervently. More full of zeal. Can I do something else to bless somebody? Can I share something? Can I encourage them? Can I listen to them for hours? Because it's my love for them that does that.

In chapter 4, he actually says that we do this because the end of all things is near. Verse 7. The end of all things is near. Therefore be of sound judgment, sober spirit, 1 Peter 4, 7. For the purpose of prayer, keep

fervent in your love for one another.

Covering a multitude of sins. Love covers a multitude of sins. Be fervent in your love.

Fervent is bubbling. You know what that word means, children? You can learn a new word today if you didn't know it before. You ever put a pot of water to boil and you turn up the heat and the water, it takes a little while, but the heat is getting more and more and more and more.

It's getting hotter and hotter and hotter. What's the mark that it's really gotten hot? It bubbles. Bubbling love.

This is the road ahead for us at RLCF as a church. Bubbling love. Bubbling love for one another.

Because the time of Christ's return is drawn near and Jesus said in Matthew 24 that as the time of his return draws near, the love of many will grow cold. Brother will betray brother. Now maybe you won't go out and betray like Judas did and call the authorities to come and arrest.

That might happen. I don't know. It could.

Jesus said he would, but are you betraying your brother by how you think about them in your heart? Are you betraying your sister by how you speak about that sister behind their back? Are you betraying your brother or sister's children by how you think about them naughty and disobedient as they may be? Are you betraying your brother in secret? Are you betraying your sister in secret? Jesus said it would happen. The way ahead for us at RLCF Church is bubbling love for one another. Bubbling love.

May it be so. Fervent devotion. Let's not be distracted from devotion to the Lord.

Let's not be distracted from devotion to the Lord. Growing in humility and dependence on the Lord and bubbling love for each other. Amen.

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