

(A Heavenly Church) 5. Faith When We Have Failed

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of humility, brokenness, and genuine faith in building a heavenly church and effective ministry.

Duration: 54:19

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 22:37, John 8:31-32, Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, James 1:22

Topics: "Spiritual Humility", "Faith And Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of remembering our past and the pit from which God has pulled us out. He uses the example of Jacob, who was broken and made lame by God before becoming Israel. Forgetting our past and the purification from our former sins can lead to spiritual blindness. The speaker also highlights the need to humble ourselves and allow God to do a thorough work in our lives, even when faced with misunderstandings and criticism. Additionally, he discusses the temptation of Jesus and the importance of resisting the urge to use our gifts and anointing for personal gain, instead encouraging selflessness and giving freely.

Transcript

I've always believed that the number one principle of all ministry is what's written about Jesus Christ, that he was made in all things like his brothers. And if we want to minister effectively to people, we must be willing to be made in all things like them. When you speak to children, come down to their age.

You speak to five-year-olds, speak like a five-year-old. Talk the language of five-year-olds, the things they are interested in. You're speaking to a teenager, be a teenager, being all things made like unto your brothers.

I've seen this in India. The missionaries who have come and been most effective in India have been the ones who become like Indians, even though they're not Indians. And I observed that through the years.

And there are others who have come as benefactors, you know, great specialists who know everything and are here to teach poor ignorant natives how to live a better life. They are the biggest Pharisees I've seen in my life. So, I mean, you don't have to cross oceans.

We can, even in our own relationships with one another, in a church, we must be, we must recognize we're all brothers. When Jesus said that you mustn't call yourself rabbi, father, what he was meaning was don't elevate yourself over others. And God gives his grace to the humble.

We must believe that it is God's will. When we speak about faith, one important aspect of faith is to believe that all of God's commandments are for our good and that all of God's commandments can be kept. One of the greatest lies that the devil has propounded through 6,000 years of man's history is that God's commands are very difficult to keep.

You cannot keep them. I mean, he started with Eve and right down till now. I mean, if you look at the back of your minds, you will find that there is a little bit of that feeling.

Some of these commandments are too tough. We can't keep them. That unbelief is what holds us back from receiving all that God has for us.

I believe this is the reason also why many do not receive a genuine baptism in the Holy Spirit. First of all, they are, they don't get their conviction from God's word that there is such a blessing God has promised for his people. See, baptism only means immersion.

It means to be totally immersed. And there are two ways we can be and the other is by standing under a waterfall. When we're baptized in water, we're immersed in a river or a tank.

When we're baptized in the Holy Spirit, we are immersed by standing under a waterfall of the Holy Spirit's pictured like a river flowing from the throne of God down to earth. And I've seen many people, because there's a lot of praise and freedom and raising hands and clapping hands among charismatics, they think that if they do that, that is an indication of being filled with the Spirit. It's a deception.

Those are external things. If you drink a bit of alcohol, you can reproduce those things. But the fullness of the Spirit is something different.

When a man is possessed by an evil spirit, the evil spirit does such a thorough job of making him evil. And I'm amazed that people who with common sense can't understand that if an evil spirit can make a person evil, what should the Holy Spirit do? Make them holy. Now, how is it that so many people imagine that they are filled with the Holy Spirit when there's so little of holiness in their life? It's one of the greatest deceptions going around Christendom today.

People living in impurity, imagining they are filled with the Holy Spirit, divorcing their wives and imagining they're filled with the Holy Spirit. What a work the devil has done in deceiving Christians. And like I've said many times of late, it's because they don't read the Bible.

They don't study the Bible. And if you don't study the Bible, let me say, you deserve to be deceived. You deserve to be deceived because God's given you his word in your own language and you keep it on a shelf and you read all the trash that other people write or that comes over Christian television.

You deserve to be deceived, definitely. One of the things I'm extremely thankful for is that when a time when I knew very little that God put me in a church where they taught me to study the word and that's what's protected me. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

We cannot have genuine scriptural faith unless we read God's word and hear what God has to say to us. And Jesus said that man cannot live by bread alone. The first spoken words of Jesus' ministry were these.

In the temptation, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Not by a few of those words. Every word.

That's, I mean, we're all familiar with that verse. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Most, if not all of you, believe that the Bible is the word of God.

I want to ask you, if you have read all of it, I want to ask you if you've taken pains to study it. You say you're very busy with your work. I studied the scriptures in about six years after my baptism.

Within six years. While I was working, I was working a full-time job and in between I would carry a Bible and a New Testament in my pocket and take any spare time here and there to study the scriptures because I believe that the only way a Christian can live is by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. And that has not only protected me from deception, it's taught me what true faith is and saved me from counterfeit faith.

Faith is the most important thing. That, you know, faith is like having money. What's money in the world? If you have faith in God, there's a lot you can get from God.

If your faith is very little, you get very little and that faith increases as we read God's word. One aspect of faith is to believe that God loves me just as I am. He doesn't want me to remain as I am.

He doesn't want me to remain defeated by sin, but he loves me even when I'm defeated, even my defeated condition. And though it's a very serious thing to fall into sin, it's more serious to lose faith. I don't know whether you realize that.

I want you to turn to Luke chapter 22 and verse 32. The Lord had told Simon, the Lord knew that Simon was going to, Simon Peter was going to deny him three times. He knew that.

The Holy Spirit had revealed supernaturally to Jesus that this disciple of yours is going to deny you three times before the next morning. Now, if you knew that somebody was going to fall into sin, if you knew it, he's going to face a very severe temptation, what would you pray for him? You would pray that he doesn't fall. But it's very interesting that Jesus never prayed that Peter shouldn't fall.

I mean, I would have thought if I knew that Peter is going to be tempted severely to deny the Lord three times, I'd say, oh Lord, please give him grace, strengthen him that he doesn't fall. But an all wise Lord, he didn't pray for that. He told him, I tell you, verse 34, the cock will not crow today until you have denied me three times.

But what did he pray for him? Verse 32, 31, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. And that was the trial he was going to face. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

Not that you will not fall. You will fall. And you need to fall.

But after you have fallen, that when you reach rock bottom, that your faith will not fail. So what does that teach us? That teaches us that it is a more serious thing when your faith fails than even if you fall into sin. I mean, if there are two evils, one is that you fall into sin and such a terrible sin of denying Jesus Christ three times.

And the other evil is that your faith may fail. Two evils, you fall into sin or your faith may fail. And the Lord says, I'm praying that your faith doesn't fail.

Never mind if you fall into sin. That's serious. But this is worse.

We need to remember that. Because most of us do not consider unbelief as a very serious sin. Adultery, that'd be terrible.

Murder, hatred. But unbelief, that's a weakness. And as long as you consider unbelief a weakness, you'll never see how important it is to have faith, the type of faith the Bible speaks about.

So remember this. Peter, you're going to deny me three times. You're going to be severely tempted and you're going to fall.

But the greater danger is that your faith may fail. And I'm praying for this. Now, why did Jesus not pray that Peter wouldn't fall? The Bible says the Lord keeps us from falling.

And he does keep us from falling. And we want him to keep us from falling. Why is it that many a times he does not keep you from falling? I mean, if you're honest in your life, you have to say many times Jesus did not keep you from falling, even though he could.

Jude says he's able to keep us even from stumbling. That's the accurate translation there. He did not even stumble, leave alone fall.

And why is it that the vast majority of believers, that the Lord allows them to fall? Why did he allow Peter to fall? God's primary aim is to break us until we recognize our impotence and our helplessness and our weakness. And he uses many methods to break us. And I would say that with the vast majority of believers I have met in my life, God never succeeds in breaking them.

Because if he succeeded, there would be such immense power released through them. And I don't see that. There would be a gentleness about their life and the mighty power of God.

We can't understand how gentleness and power go together. You see it in Jesus. He said, learn from me for I am humble and gentle in heart.

But the greatest manifestation of power through a human being was seen in Jesus Christ. Power and gentleness, compassion, and almighty power. That can only come through a broken person.

I see the reason why we find very few really spiritual leaders is because they're not broken. God, if God gives power and authority to an unbroken man, he will be a dictator. And that's why we see so many Christian, gifted Christian leaders end up as cult leaders, dictators, manipulate people, control people, use people to get money for themselves, some gain for themselves, exploit women sexually, and Christian leaders.

It's because they were never broken. And I believe that's the reason also why the Lord cannot build his church in many places. God cannot build his church anywhere until he finds at least one man who's thoroughly broken.

He doesn't need two or three. He can begin with one. If he finds one man whom he can break completely, there will be a church there.

If you're living in some place where there is no Christian fellowship, no real church that manifests the truths of the body of Christ, the greatest work that you can go back home and do is not evangelism. There's plenty of evangelism going around in this world. I've seen a lot of it in India, but it's very difficult in the whole country of India with all the evangelism and thousands of people converted, where I can go to a church that manifests the truth of the body of Christ.

A church where there are apostles and prophets and evangelists and teachers and shepherds like in the first century. A church where the primary mark is not that they break bread every Sunday, but that they love one another. Not that they speak in tongues or use a particular songbook, but that they love one another.

And a church where the leader is a servant and where everyone is a brother. It's so difficult to see. I can hardly think of any church like so few in India.

A church where people don't love money, where the focus is not on money. It's so difficult to find. What is the reason? Because God is not able to find one broken man.

Jesus said, if a grain of wheat falls into the ground, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground, John 12 24, it'll remain alone. Why are you alone brother? Why are you a lonely wanderer going from fellowship to fellowship? Never able to build a body. Shall I tell you the truth? Do you want a scan, a diagnosis? You are unwilling to die to yourself.

You're a grain of wheat. You want to be preserved in a glass case and to be admired by everybody. You'll be alone.

But if you're willing, like Jesus himself was, to fall into the ground and be trampled upon by men, to lose your reputation and your honor, to be misunderstood, persecuted perhaps, vilified, falsely accused, and be broken, and that grain of wheat no longer looks beautiful, trampled, buried. From that grain of wheat will come forth a hundred grains of wheat. That's the law in nature.

And Jesus said that that's the law in the Christian life. So what is the greatest work for you that you can do for God when you go home? Not start a Bible study group. Any devil can do that.

The devil can conduct a Bible study group better than any of us can and teach it better than any of us can. A lot of people ease their conscience by going to Bible study fellowships and Bible study groups and knowing more and more of the Bible. It's not necessarily the body of Christ.

Christ is not building Bible study groups. I'll tell you that. He is building the church.

You read the Acts of the Apostles. Where do they have Bible study groups? Paul planted churches, not Bible study groups. He planted churches where people were totally committed to the Lord and committed to one another.

And for that, for a Bible, if you want to run a Bible study group, it's like a group of people studying chemistry. Supposing you want to conduct a chemistry class. We're all interested in chemistry.

We're going to study chemistry. Gather a whole lot of people who study chemistry and maybe you're a PhD in chemistry and you teach chemistry. Or you could teach history.

There are people who are interested in studying history. They don't become spiritual. They become more knowledgeable in history or more knowledgeable in chemistry.

Or you can conduct a Bible study class. They become more knowledgeable in the Bible and you get a satisfaction that you're conducting, teaching so many people about the Bible. It's like somebody gets a satisfaction, I'm teaching chemistry to so many people.

Don't fool yourself that that's the church. I mean, if you have fooled yourself like that till now, get rid of it today. That is not the church.

That's not what Jesus is doing. He said, I will build my church. He didn't say, I will build Bible study groups.

It's one of the devil's substitutes for the church. And he's fooled multitudes of born-again Christians that they're doing something for God. They're only increasing in Bible knowledge.

I want to ask you, has it made your home life better? Has it made your thought life better? Has it freed you from sin in your life? What's the use of that Bible study? These guys who study chemistry, they don't get free from sin. These guys who study history, they don't get free from sin. And these other guys who study the Bible don't get free from sin.

What's the difference? You have to fall into the ground and die. And the reason why the Lord allows us to fail is because all other methods of trying to break us have not succeeded. God can allow us to be broken by giving us a difficult boss at work, for example, and we can't find another job.

That can break us. It could be a difficult wife, a difficult husband, difficult children. It could be financial difficulties.

God has various means of trying to break us. It could be failure in your business. God broke Job through death in his family to the failure of his business.

There are many ways in which God seeks to bring us to a sense of need and say, Lord, I'm a desperately needy person. But very often he doesn't succeed with all those other methods. And so finally, he says, I've got to allow this person to fall into sin.

At least that will break him. It's his last resort when every other method has failed. He allows you to fall into some terrible sins, hoping at least that will humble you and break you.

But even that doesn't break many people. He allows you to do some work for God and it becomes a mess. So many things God tries, but it doesn't seem to break people.

They somehow get broken for two, three weeks and then they're back again, the same strong self they are. They refuse to remain in the ground, broken, buried. You know, you plant something in the ground and you can't dig it out every few days and expect it to grow.

It's got to be there and take root and die. So that's why Jesus prayed, didn't pray for Simon Peter to be saved from falling. And that's why he doesn't pray that you will be kept from falling.

And that's why he doesn't save you from falling because that is his last resort to break us. And when I see the number of defeated Christians who are still not broken, I'm amazed. I mean, Peter was broken when he fell into sin three times, denying the Lord.

He went out and wept bitterly. What for? Because he had failed the Lord. Can you think of the last time that you wept bitterly because you had let down the Lord in some way? That's happened numerous times in my life.

And I believe if you have not had occasions like that, something's wrong with your Christianity, your glory and perhaps knowledge. You don't allow God to show you the seriousness of sin in your life. God has allowed you to fail just like Simon Peter, but he's not succeeded in breaking you like he could Peter.

Why did he want to break Peter? Because he had such a fantastic ministry for him on the day of Pentecost. And in order for Peter to fulfill that ministry and not get puffed up at the end of that, he allowed him to have such a deep failure in his life, just about six or seven weeks before he entered into his ministry, so that he would never forget what a wretched sinner he was. You know, imagine if you preached a 15-minute message somewhere and 3,000 people got converted.

And not only converted, they got baptized in the Holy Spirit. And if all 3,000 were Jews, boy, that would be fantastic. I mean, your hat wouldn't fit on your head anymore.

It'd be very difficult for you to not be conscious when you walk around that people are pointing at you and say, that's a guy who brought 3,000 Jews to Christ. Can you imagine what Peter faced on the day of Pentecost? And if one of the disciples came to Peter and said, hey Peter, you did a great job, man. He said, I know what I did six, seven weeks ago.

You don't know. I was a total failure. He was a broken man.

He couldn't be puffed up. And that's why he remained an apostle. The easiest thing for God to do is to bless us and bless our ministry.

It's very easy for God to do that. The most difficult thing for God to do is to bless us and keep us humble after he has done something through us. It was easy for him to create the universe with a snap of his fingers.

He could create all this universe, millions of stars. But to keep one man humble after he has blessed him in his ministry is almost impossible for Almighty God. I've seen numerous cases of that all around me.

That's what destroys the work of God. And that's why God has to do a work of breaking in us, bring us down to zero before he does anything through us. Otherwise, we'll mess up his work.

When the boy gave five loaves and two fishes to Jesus, he gave thanks when he broke it. Then the multitudes were fed. It's a principle all over Scripture.

When the rock is smitten, then the waters flow. When the alabaster box of ointment is broken, the whole house is filled with the odor of the ointment. If we die with him, we live with him.

It's a principle that goes right through Scripture everywhere. You see it in nature. When one atom is split, it can give electricity to a whole city.

Just one little atom, an atom which is so small that you can hardly see it under a microscope. And Almighty God has put a lesson there in nature that the smallest of things that you can hardly see in a microscope, when it's split, it releases such tremendous power that it can give electricity to a whole city. So when God wants to make us a blessing to all the families of the earth, like he promised Abraham, he

has to break us.

All the great men in the Old Testament had to be broken. The strong Jacob who could grab his brother's leg when he came out of his mother's womb, who could cheat his brother of the birthright and cheat his father and deceive his father. God couldn't use him.

God had great purposes for him, but he couldn't use him until he broke him completely and shattered his socket of his hip, made him lame. Then he said, now you're Israel. He became Israel the day his hip went out of joint.

And where as a young man, he, you know, compared to the length of life people lived in those days, Jacob was a young man when his hip was broken. And the Bible says these amazing words in Hebrews 11. You know, we saw that the other day, the great miracles people did by faith.

And in the midst of that chapter where you read about red seas being split open and walls of ground and all types of amazing miracles, mouths of lions being shut by faith. What's mentioned about Jacob is by faith, verse 21, he leaned on the top of his staff. What miracle is that? He leaned on the top of his staff.

That was the greatest miracle among all those miracles. Because as a young man, imagine if you as a young man, 25 years old, had to walk with a cane. That would be pretty humiliating.

Jacob, he was 60 years old, but as I said, relative to the times in which people, length of time people lived in those days, he was a young man. And he had to walk with a cane. And every time he leaned on the top of his staff, he knew what God had done to him.

He needed that because his hip was put out of socket by God. He was broken. And he would always remember, God made me an Israel when he broke me.

I believe we need that memory. We tend to forget our past. Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 1, I call this the quickest way to be spiritually blind.

If you want to know the quickest way to be spiritually blind or spiritually short-sighted, here it is, 2 Peter 1 verse 9. He who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted because he's forgotten his purification from his former sins. When you forget the pit from which God pulled you out, you've already become blind. When you forget the mess you made of your own life and you become a harsh critic of somebody else who's failing, you're blind, brother.

You're blind. You're short-sighted. In relation to all our former sins, there must be zero sense of guilt.

Like I said the other day, yesterday, we must believe that the blood of Jesus has blotted out all our sins. There's not a memory of even one sin. He says, I will not remember your sin anymore.

Zero sense of guilt about all our past life if we have confessed our sins. But, till the end of our life, a constant remembrance of our former sins, of the pit from which God pulled us out, of the mess we had made of our life. I don't think Peter ever in his life forgot how he denied the Lord three times.

And when God breaks a man, that's what he does. And that's when such a person gets victory over sin. He can never be proud of it, number one.

And he can never despise another person who doesn't have victory. I know in my own pursuit of victory, the Lord had to take me through failure, failure, failure, bring me to rock bottom. And I never knew the reason for that.

I thought all hope was gone at one point in my life. But now I see that God had to take me there so that when he did give me victory, when he did keep me from falling, I could never be proud of it. I could never think that I did this.

I could never think that it was through some effort of mine that I could overcome depression and rejoice in the Lord always, that it was through some spirituality of my own that I overcame bad moods or anger. No, he keeps me from falling. I couldn't never think that it was me.

Even the ministry of the Word, I know that if the grace of God departs from me, my tongue will be dumb. I will fall into the most horrible sins the very next moment, no matter how many years I have overcome. See, that recognition comes because God's allowed me to fail so many times in the years when I was seeking for victory.

So dear brothers and sisters, if you're failing, don't get discouraged. Let God do a thorough work. He's trying to bring you down to zero.

It took 20 years with Jacob. It took 40 years with Moses. It doesn't have to take so long.

It can be a very quick work like it was with Peter and Paul. But we can't dictate that period because it's different with different people. But once he's brought you there, it's like the story of the disciples trying to catch fish.

They try and try and try and try and fail and fail and fail and fail and fail. And when they're in the point of giving up, when they've come to their wits end, they don't know what to do. Jesus appears on the shore and fills their boat with fish.

It's the last miracle he did. It's the only miracle he did after his resurrection. He did that more than once, that miracle, to permanently imprint on their minds a lesson, what he was trying to teach them all along.

That it's when you come to the end of yourself that I can do a work in you. Otherwise, you'll begin to glory in your victory. And the other thing is, when you have made such a mess of your life and you never forget it, you always remember, not with a sense of guilt, but you always remember with a sense of gratitude what God, the pit God took you out from.

The second result is that you can never despise another human being for the rest of your life. You cannot despise a sinner no matter how deeply he has fallen. I've met many believers who come to me for counsel, who tell me of terrible sins they've fallen into, worse than unbelievers.

I can say before God, I never despised any of them. It has become impossible for me to despise a human being now, because of the work God did in me, of bringing me to failure, failure, failure, and acknowledgement of that failure. And that's the other thing that made me desperately aware of the need of fellowship with other believers.

I can't understand today. I would feel very uncomfortable living alone as a wanderer. I see so many believers who are wanderers and lonely, and they seem to be quite comfortable.

I'm sure they are defeated in their life. Absolutely positive, because God never intended us to live by ourselves. The Bible says in the Psalms, He puts the solitary in families.

And I was a solitary believer, and I was defeated in those days. And it's fellowship that also helped me, to be a part of the body of Christ. God created us to be a part of the body.

He never created these fingers to be fingers and parts of a body to be all by themselves. We are to be together and work together. That's one of the great truths of the New Covenant.

And I realized all this when I'd come to an end of myself. Everything fell into place. When God brought me to zero, I saw so many things.

I saw the New Covenant. I saw Jesus had been tempted like me. I saw what the body of Christ was in the New Covenant Church.

So many things. It was, you know, just like suddenly a hundred full fruit, a hundred fold fruit came out of the grain of wheat that had been buried, dead and buried. When He allows people to misunderstand you, keep your mouth shut.

When He allows people to speak evil about you, don't ever defend yourself. It's part of God's breaking process. Humble yourself.

When your wife yells at you, keep your mouth shut. Humble yourself. When your husband yells at you, keep your mouth shut.

Humble yourself. Let God do a thorough work. He will never, you say, but he'll take advantage of me or she'll take advantage of me.

No, no, no, no. If you have faith, you know that God will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability. That's a promise in Scripture.

I mean, if it were not for that promise in Scripture, we'd all be reduced to doormats following Jesus. But there's that wonderful promise in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13. He will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability.

But with that temptation will give you the strength to overcome and escape and not fall into sin. God can do that for you. So faith is to believe that God is wise in the way He's doing everything in my life.

He's loving. His commandments are all for my good. And we must believe, faith is to believe that God can bring good out of evil.

There's a beautiful verse in Deuteronomy chapter 23. Deuteronomy 23 and verse 5. It speaks about the time when Balaam sought to curse Israel. And even though it says Balaam didn't curse, it must have been something he did.

I don't know. Because here it says in the latter part of that verse, the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing because the Lord your God loves you. Do you know that nobody can put a curse or do any witchcraft on you that can harm you? They may try to do it.

It'll turn to be a blessing. The Lord turned the curse into a blessing. He's a God who can turn darkness into light.

I mean we see that every morning at sunrise. And we see that in the beginning of the Bible out in the darkness. He said let there be light.

He can turn defeat into victory. He can turn the evil that men do. Not just restrain evil.

That itself is a great thing. That restrain evil from harming us. We often pray Lord don't let anybody harm me.

That's great. But God does something even greater. That he allows men to harm us and turns that into victory.

Into something good for us. That's even greater. Only God can do that.

And the greatest proof of that is I've often spoken about this. The greatest evil that was ever done on the on the face of this earth was the crucifixion of the Son of God. There's no greater evil than any human being ever did on the face of this earth than crucifying the Son of God when he came to earth.

And if I were to ask you what is the greatest the best event that ever took place on this earth? It's the same thing. The crucifixion of the Son of God. Isn't that interesting? That the worst thing that ever happened on the earth was also the best thing that ever happened on this earth.

Where would you and I be today if it were not for that cross? And that is God's eternal proof that I can turn the worst that man can do into the very best for people. Did it cause suffering to his son? Of course. Tremendous suffering.

Such suffering as you and I will never know. But that was the price Jesus was willing to pay so that man might be blessed. And he says if you want to follow me you'll have to go the same way too.

Are you willing to go to the cross so that others may be blessed? A broken man says yes. A man who is seeking his own honor will say no. What am I going to get out of it? See the world is full of people who are always asking what will I get out of it? And I want to say as long as you have that attitude you can never be a servant of the Lord.

Because the answer is you'll get nothing out of it. You'll get death. You'll get suffering.

You'll get misunderstanding. You'll get persecution. You'll get abuse.

And you'll have to keep your mouth shut. You want it? The one who's seeking the glory of God says yes Lord. If it will glorify your name, yes.

To be an elder in a church, that's not an easy thing. It's a great responsibility. It's a great honor.

It's a great privilege. But it's a very very difficult task. I been in eldership for 34 years and I know what it means.

We had to clean up the mess that other people make. All the time. We are working with difficult people and people who have difficulties with each other.

It's not an easy thing at all. And you can't fulfill it because you get nothing out of it. Nothing.

There's no financial gain. There's nothing at all. The person who's seeking something for himself is totally unfit to be a servant of God.

It's one of the things the Lord showed me when I was meditating on that first temptation. You know, if you look at the first temptation, the devil came to Jesus and said, if you are the son of God, that's how he starts. Imagine trying to make Jesus doubt whether he's the son of God.

Why won't he try that with you and me? Of course he will. And particularly, you know, just a couple of days earlier, there was a voice from heaven that said, this is my beloved son. You got an assurance in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

You're the child of God. And the next thing the devil says, uh-huh, you're a child of God, are you? And we begin to doubt. Don't be afraid.

He tried to pass doubt in the mouth of Jesus also. The voice from heaven said, this is my beloved son. And the devil says next, ah, if you're the son of God.

And then he goes on. What happened that day? Let me paraphrase the devil's words. Remember when the Holy Spirit came upon you, you got mighty power.

Now you have a need in your life. Food. Use the power to turn these stones into bread to satisfy your need.

And Jesus said, no. This is where so many preachers, pastors, and elders have failed. The devil comes and says, are you a pastor? Are you an elder? You've been appointed by God.

You've been given the gift to preach. You've got an anointing. People listen to you.

Use it to get something for yourself. Make money with it. Write books.

Your followers will buy them and you can become rich like the authors in the world. Make music CDs. God's given you the ability to sing.

Get a guitar and get some musicians and make music CDs and become a millionaire. Where are the people who will say no like Jesus? Where are the preachers who will say no? Where are the Christian musicians who will say, no, I will give out my CDs for free? You find that? You see why is Christianity so shallow, empty, Babylonian today? And hardly any preacher would raise a voice against this. They don't have light on this temptation.

Why can't they see that in that temptation? Use your power for your own ends. If it's not money, some people don't seek for money. Get honor.

Get people to respect you. Don't let them treat you like an ordinary brother. You're not an ordinary brother.

You're a special brother with a capital B. You don't want to be a reverend or a rabbi or anything, but capital B brother. And don't say you're a servant. Say you're a minister of the gospel.

That's more respectful. All this rubbish. Get honor for yourself.

Get them to serve you. Get them to respect you. Get them to bow down to you.

Get something for yourself out of the anointing God gave you. Jesus said, no, I will not. I will live by every word that my father told me.

And he has not told me to do that. But that same Jesus would use his power to make bread for 5,000 hungry people one day. He would use it for others, but he would never use it for himself.

The mark of a genuine servant of God. Any of you can be a servant of God. Seek God for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The very next temptation, the very next thing will be the devil saying, use this for yourself. And I see most of Christendom, its leaders, its musicians, its preachers have fallen because they are not alert that the devil came with that temptation. Be careful.

You meditate on scripture. I feel the trouble with a lot of Christians is they read through the scripture so quickly. You read through those temptations so quickly and you don't, I mean, when I point it out to you, you'll see it.

Well, you could have seen it for yourself if you had spent 10 minutes on that verse instead of 5 seconds. One of the things I'm trying to do nowadays everywhere is to teach people to read the Bible slowly. Don't be in a hurry to go through the Bible in one year.

Let a few verses go through you in one year. That would do you a lot more good than going through the Bible. It's good to read through the Bible in one year.

I read the Bible through in 6 months after I was converted because I wanted to know what it said. And through the years, you know, in addition to your meditation, by all means, have your through the Bible in one year reading. That's okay.

But if you have, I mean, if you don't have time for that, priority is meditation. Blessed is the man who meditates in the word of God. I'm more interested in the Bible going through me than me going through the Bible.

I'll tell you that. And let me tell you something that may shock you. It's a very good habit to read the Bible every morning.

In my early days, it's a thing, you know, when everything's quiet and undisturbed, you read the Bible. Of course, mothers with small children don't very often have time to read the Bible in the morning. They can only read when everybody's at night sometime in the day to spend time meditating on scripture.

But supposing one morning you just didn't read the Bible. For whatever reason, you were in a hurry. You rushed off to work.

You don't have to feel the days lost. Don't think you'll have a flat tire or an accident because you read that superstition. I assure you nothing like that will happen because you didn't read the Bible.

What is more important is to make sure that you don't disobey the Bible throughout the day. That's more important. I find a lot of people who feel guilty that they didn't spend half an hour with the Bible in the morning who don't feel guilty when they lust after a woman during the day or get angry with someone

during the day or love money during the day.

I said those are a million times more important. I don't mind if I didn't read the Bible in the morning if I obeyed the Bible throughout the day. Where did the early Christians get the opportunity to read the Bible every morning? They never had a Bible at home, you know that? Do you know that for 1400 years hardly anybody had a Bible at home after Christ from the day of Pentecost? These things were, Bibles like this were printed only about 600 years ago.

Why didn't, if this was so important, why didn't God allow printing to be discovered in the first century? It is obedience which is to the scripture which is much more important than knowing the scripture. Obedience. If you love me, read the Bible.

No, if you love me, keep my commandments. Not read the Bible every day but take up the cross every day if you want to follow me. Now as I said, don't misunderstand me.

People misquote me and say, Brezhnev said it's not necessary to read the Bible. I remember once, I've been misquoted so many times on so many things. I said to the Lord once, I said, Lord, what shall I do? These guys are misquoting me and the Lord said, they are misquoting me also all the time.

I said, okay Lord, that's fine then. I'm in good company. Aren't there people misquoting Jesus in the world today? Yes or no? Yeah, numerous people.

Look at all the cults, look at all the Christian denominations misquoting Jesus. So it stopped disturbing me now. So but don't misunderstand me.

I'm not saying you shouldn't read the scriptures. What I'm trying to say is, obeying is more important. Don't satisfy your conscience that you read the scriptures if you don't obey it.

Are you obeying what you have read? Read through the scriptures slowly. Faith comes by hearing. It doesn't come by reading the Bible, by hearing.

Romans 10:17 is clear. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, which is particularly the New Testament. That means as I read, I must hear every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

What is God trying to say to me through this? Do I hear it? From that faith will come in my heart. When Jesus prayed for Peter, Peter when you hit rock bottom, I want you to have faith. I want you to remember God still loves you.

That's basically what faith is. You know what is it that made the prodigal son come home? The assurance that his father still loved him. And that's what God wants us to know.

No matter how deep you've fallen, brother, sister, God still loves you. Trust him. He wants you to come to a life of victory.

He wants you to build his church. I say that to every one of you here. He doesn't want you to have Bible studies, but to build his church.

Don't be satisfied with the second best. Seek his best. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us each one to fulfill your will on earth before we leave this world, before you come again. We pray that you'll succeed with each of us as you seek to break us and humble us and bring us to zero so that you can do a mighty eternal work through every one of us. Thank you, Father.

In Jesus name. Amen.

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