

# Building the Church as Christ's Body

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects Christ, focusing on building godly families and churches. It encourages believers to be unashamed witnesses for Christ in all aspects of life, including work and personal interactions. The speaker highlights the need for modesty, integrity, and humility in representing Christ, urging individuals to stand firm in their faith and be a light in a world that is drifting away from Christian values.*

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**Scripture:** Isaiah 54:13, 2 Corinthians 1:20, 1 Timothy 2:9, Isaiah 59:21, Matthew 10:32, Ephesians 4:15

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## Description

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## Transcript

So though we preach holiness and victory over sin in this church and in all of our CFC churches, that is not where we end. It's a pathway. God's final goal personally for each of us is to make us like Jesus Christ.

So let me show you that first of all so that we don't have any doubt about it. Everything must be established by scripture. Turn with me to Romans chapter 8 verse 28 and 29.

Verse 28 is a very popular verse with many many Christians. It's a very comforting verse. It speaks about the sovereignty of God controlling all events, circumstances, people that come into our life in such a way all the external factors that affect any true disciple of Jesus.

I say true disciple of Jesus not just someone who has accepted Christ to go to heaven. One who wants to follow Jesus every day in his life on earth. Romans 8 verse 28 says that every single thing will work for his good, for his very best.

For whom is it? You know whenever you get a check, see if it's in your name. Otherwise you can't credit it into your account. So when you read Romans 8 verse 28, this fantastic promise, see if this refers to you or to somebody else.

We know that God causes every single thing to work together for good. Important question is for whom? Let me paraphrase those words. Those who love God supremely, who love God more than anything in the world, who love God more than their father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, all the people whom Jesus said we must love him more than in Luke 14 26, and who love him more than their property, more than their job, more than for whom God is supreme, who love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and who are called according to his purpose.

That means those who want to fulfill God's purpose for their life and not some of their own plan and purpose for their lives. So if you qualify, you love God more than anything and anyone in this world, and you have no desire to fulfill anything other than God's purpose for your life, here is this most fantastic promise that every single thing that ever happens to you will work for your good. Now I've proved a lot of that in my own life in the 60 years I've been a believer where a lot of people have tried to harm me, it's worked for my good.

People who have done me good, it's worked for my good. People who have done me harm, it's worked for my good. Circumstances over which I had no control worked for my good.

So I can, today I can say that from experience. It's not just a verse in scripture for me. And I believe that every single person can experience that if you love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and your only desire is to fulfill God's will on earth.

Believe me, it's the best place to live in. But the ultimate purpose of all this, I mean this is a pathway where God is working everything for our good, but then he says you're driving towards a goal, and that goal is mentioned in the next verse. He predestined, and the word predestined is from two words, predestination.

Pre means beforehand, destination means the ultimate goal. Just like when you, if you get an air ticket, on the air ticket your destination is printed long before you get into the airplane. You are to arrive at Denver, wherever you started from, Denver is your destination.

It's predestined. And then you go to the airport and get into a plane going to Denver. You don't look for the most beautiful looking plane or the bigger plane or the biggest plane.

You look for that which is going to Denver. So what is that destination? That destination is that we might be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. So that is our destination.

Little by little God wants to make you and me like Christ who lived the most perfect life on earth as a man. So Christ did not come to earth only to die for our sins. He came to manifest by his earthly life the way man should live.

Otherwise God could have made Jesus come to earth in a human body just like Adam. Adam was never a baby. He was made a full grown man from day one.

And God could have made another lump of clay on earth and Jesus could have come into that lump of clay and been a perfect man from day one if his only purpose was to die for our sins. Come like that, the next day be killed for our sins, raised up the third day and gone back to heaven. Job done.

No, job not done. Because forgiveness of sins is not the only goal God has for us. He wanted to demonstrate through an earthly life of Jesus Christ how man was supposed to live on earth.

And the Bible says in John 1.18 that Jesus explained the Father. Most people, all the people on earth did not know God as a Father. They knew him as a mighty terrible God.

But Jesus explained God as a Father who cares for us. And every single person who comes to Christ must know God as a Father. So that's the reason why Jesus lived 33 years on earth.

To show how man should live and God wants to make us like that so that little by little we become like him. And it says here so that he can become the first of many brothers. That's why we call Jesus our elder brother.

So heaven is going to be populated with millions of people who have become like Jesus Christ. Everyone you meet in heaven will be to some degree like Jesus. Those who have been extremely faithful to God on earth will be much more like Christ.

And others will be like Christ to a lesser extent. But there will be no sin in any of them. We wonder what heaven will be like.

We don't know all the details. But there will be different degrees of maturity even though they are all like Christ depending on how faithful we've been here on earth. Because the Bible says that believers are going to be rewarded when they come before the Lord for how they lived on this earth.

So that's obvious that all of us are not going to be in the same position in heaven even if we are in heaven. That our faithfulness on earth is going to determine to a tremendous extent what is going to be for us in eternity. I believe that with all my heart.

Now I'm not seeking to be faithful to the Lord to get a reward in heaven. That would be wrong. Then I would be disqualified immediately.

We live for the Lord because we are grateful for what he's done for us. But the Lord says well that will end in a reward for faithfulness. And not all, there will be many people in heaven but just like on earth there are so many people.

Some are very wealthy and some are very poor but all are on the earth. In the same way in heaven there will be a lot of people in heaven but all will not be the same. Spiritually in heaven some will be fantastically wealthy and spiritually some in heaven will be fantastically poor.

But they'll all be in heaven. And that depends on how faithful they were on earth. So if a person's only goal is going to be to go to heaven, he's going to be very disappointed when he gets there, when he discovers what he missed.

Because what you miss, you can't ask God to give you one more life to live that. See, to shout the praises of God in heaven is going to sound empty if you don't shout his praises here on earth. Because here on earth it's unpopular to praise God and to live for him.

And there it'll be popular to praise God and live for him. So if you are willing to praise God and live for God only where it is popular, you're a selfish person. It's here where it is unpopular to be a true disciple of Jesus that God tests us to see whether we'll be faithful to him and we'll praise him, etc.

So our goal is to be like Christ and God's going to populate heaven with such people. So that is our individual personal goal. But it's going to be a body in heaven and that body is being built on this earth.

So that's why Jesus said, I will build my church. That's a word which is tremendously misunderstood. Church is not a building.

It's not a denomination. It's a group of people who have been pulled out of the world to come under the headship of Jesus Christ. Church is not just a place where we love one another and care for one another and help one another.

It's not a place where we just come to listen to stirring sermons and improve our personal life or our family life. It's a place where we are built together. We're not initially built together when we come to a fellowship.

God wants to build us together. So our goal in all of our churches, CFC churches, is to build the church of Jesus Christ. And that's why we expect everyone to be totally committed to Christ.

If you're totally committed to Christ, you will be totally committed to the other members of his body. Example, if this hand of mine is totally committed to the head, to the brain that controls this hand, this hand will be totally committed to every part of this body. If any part of this body is injured, this hand will rush to help that.

If one hand is not able to do a work, this hand will do the work of two hands, because the other hand is temporarily incapacitated. So that is a body. So we're not like, you know, in the many medical colleges, they have human bodies that are cut up into pieces, hands and legs and noses and ears and all separate.

Yeah, we can say they're all parts of a body, but they're not a body. There are two eyes here and there are two ears here and two hands and two legs and a stomach and a heart and a liver and all. Every part of the body is there in that anatomy laboratory, but it's not a body.

It cannot function together. And that's not the type of church Jesus is building, where you have your own walk with the Lord and somebody else has their own walk with the Lord and that's a hand and that's an eye and that's a ear and all like pieces of, you know, anatomy laboratory. That's not a church.

The church is where all these are built together. Like that little booklet I advertised yesterday, you can be a congregation. A congregation is a group of people, no different from a movie theater congregation.

The only difference is there they're interested in a movie, here they're interested in a message from the Bible. And many churches are congregations. They go there only because there's a good preacher.

You go to a movie theater, like many people, I don't go, but if people go to movie theaters to watch a good movie. So people go to church to listen to a good preacher. It's a congregation.

When you go to a movie theater, you don't even know the person sitting next to you. And the next day you go to the next time you go to a movie theater, somebody else sitting next to you. So in these mega churches and many churches, people come together, they don't know each other, but they are interested in what's happening up in front, a great preacher, a famous preacher.

And they are listening to him and they come there mainly to listen to him. I explained that little booklet called Congregation Club and Church, you can read it. A club is where people don't have a connection with the Lord, but they're not much interested in what's being preached in the pulpit.

It doesn't matter whether it's Ephesians or Philippians or they sort of endure it. And probably the sermon is not very interesting. But the people in that church are so loving and caring.

And the children are so good. And people say, this is a good place for my children to grow up in. Wow, what a nice place.

And the children are friendly, the people are friendly. If I want to shift my residence from one place to another, the church people will come and help me. And then I'm sick, the church people will send food to my house.

What a wonderful place to be in. They don't need any connection with the Lord. They're not interested in the preaching from the pulpit.

But it's a wonderful relationship with one another. It's a club. The only thing they don't come there to play cards.

They don't come there to play tennis. They come there to listen to a sermon. But the main thing is they're a wonderful club.

And because that relationship is so good and intense, they say this is a wonderful church. No, it's not. Find out what's the connection with all these people with the head.

Pretty much nothing. They husbands and wives yell and scream at each other at home and there's unrighteousness in financial matters and all types of things. But it doesn't matter because they care for one another.

But a church is where every single person has a connection with the head. They listen to him, they've got a good conscience, and they care for one another. But the connection with the head comes first.

Like the two arms of the cross, the vertical arm always bigger than the horizontal arm. The connection with the head is most important. But without the horizontal arm, there's no cross.

There's a horizontal relationship with one another also, but the vertical one is most important. That is a church. That's what we're seeking to build in our churches.

We're encouraging each person to have a wonderful vertical relationship with Jesus Christ, with a clear conscience all the time. And also to build fellowship with one another. I'll tell you my experience through 44 years of building churches in many countries.

I have seen that sometimes the people I sit with in my hometown of Bangalore in India, people I meet more frequently than all the other Christians I know, I don't have much fellowship with some of them. This is a fact. Even though they sat with me there for 20, 30 years.

Very little of what we call Christian fellowship. And then at a conference, somebody comes along whom I have not seen for one year, and who's living in another place, and he comes along for the conference and instantly we have very close fellowship. You know why? Because all that one year he was walking with the Lord there, and I've been walking with the Lord here, and when we come together we are one.

Because we are both connected to the head, even though we didn't see each other. This is fellowship. It doesn't have to be closeness all the time.

Why do these two hands work together? Is it because they are always holding hands and hanging around together like this? That's a club. You know, you say, I've got to hang around with all the friends here in the

church, and then we'll be one. No, you will not.

That is a human type of oneness. Always these two members of the body always holding together. No.

It's this connection of this hand with the head, and this connection of this hand with the head that makes them work together. So it's not by my spending a lot of time with one person. You say, this is my favorite sister.

I like to meet with her all the time. I go to her home and help her out in various things. Or this is my favorite brother.

I like to hang out with him all the time. You'll be just part of a club. But instead, if both of you really seek a connection with Christ and say, Lord, I want to walk with you with a good conscience all the time, you'll find a oneness with that other person which is way beyond this hanging around together.

A lot of people who hang around together for a long time, sometimes after four or five years they break up and they never want to talk to each other. I've seen that happen a lot of times, and you've probably seen that too. The best of friends become the best of enemies after a while.

Because they're trying to have a fellowship in a horizontal direction alone. It's the same with a husband and wife. If a husband and wife are to really got to be one with each other, it's not by spending a lot of time together, which is very important.

That's the horizontal arm of the cross. It's by each of them having a connection with the head, where Christ is between them, and the cross is between them, where they died to themselves. Then they become one with each other.

And if you and your husband and you and your wife are not becoming more and more one with each other, something's wrong with your marriage. Something is fundamentally wrong. And the reason would be that you're not walking with the Lord in your personal life.

Your connection with Christ is shaky. And that's the reason. So in our churches, we seek to build the church because Jesus said, I will build my church.

And in the church there is giving and taking. There's yielding. For example, the Bible speaks in Ephesians 4. Turn to this verse.

Ephesians is one of the great chapters about the church as the body of Christ. Great books, rather. And in Ephesians 4, it speaks in verse 15.

See the balance here. The vertical arm of the cross, verse 15. Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up to the head, even Christ.

This is the vertical connection. In truth and love, we grow up to the head, the brain of the church, the Christ. And from there, from the head, like I told you, the whole body, which is the different arms and legs and all work together, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies.

You know, there are a lot of joints in the body. Here, for example, elbow is a joint. At the wrist is another joint.

The thumb has got one joint here, another one at the bottom. This finger has got three joints. One, two, three.

And this finger has got three joints. And just in this little finger, just in the hand, there are so many joints. And that's what makes, supposing your joints were all stiff, you wouldn't be able to hold anything.

Thank God for the multiple joints in your hand that help you to hold something, grip something, and be able to move your hand around and move your hand, pick up something. It's all because of joints. Joints are very, very important.

Your head's got a joint. Otherwise, you wouldn't be able to turn around. You wouldn't be able to bend it back and forth.

Your knees have joints. And all over the body, you can bend down because of joints. So it says here, the importance of joints in verse 16, that which every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body in itself in love.

And what that means in my fellowship with my brother, there are times when I have to yield to him and times when he has to yield to me. Take for example, this elbow. Here is, let's assume this forearm is one member of the body and the upper arm is another member of the body and they want to work together.

How will they work together? This joint has got to do a great job. Otherwise, they won't be able to work together. There'll be just one stiff arm, one strong upper arm, one strong forearm, two wonderful brothers, but they can't get along with each other.

Have you come across people like that? I've come across many people like that. Wonderful brother here, wonderful brother, they just can't get along with each other because the joint is not working. A wonderful man, husband, and a wonderful wife, but they can't get along with each other.

Have you come across cases like that? Both very zealous in the church, but they can't get along with each other at home. Joint. Problem is the joint.

Now in a joint, you know, when this muscle up in the front pulls up, the muscle at the back has to yield. And when the muscle at the back pulls, this one must yield. So there's, one of the very important things in fellowship is you have to learn to yield to the other and not always pull.

And that's the problem with many marriages. It's a problem in a lot of fellowship in churches. And if you're really connected to the head, that joint will function perfectly.

And also I want to say, if you hear noises in the joint, creaking sounds, you know something is wrong. They call it arthritis. And there are some relationships in families and churches which have got a lot of arthritis.

Anytime they try to work together, there's a lot of noise there. There shouldn't be. In a good functioning joint, there's no noise at all.

It's a smooth running of the home, husband and wife, without noise, without strain. Is that possible? Yes. If they're all connected to the head.

So that's why we emphasize connection with Christ. And the test of it is your relationship with one another. If you really love God with all our heart, we'll be able to love one another easily.

But we are born with a tremendous love for oneself. And you see that in a little child. You see how you send children up to eat their snacks and you find each one going for the biggest piece themselves.

They're not worried about anybody else. Children are like that. When we are grown up also, we are like that, but we lose our testimony so we graciously take the small piece so we get a reputation for being humble and all that.

But deep down we haven't changed. And you see that in other more important. I mean, we're not worried who goes through the door first.

We're not worried who gets the biggest slice of cake. But we are worried when it comes to money. And there we prove how important we feel ourselves are.

We grab before anybody else can get anything. All this disappears when Christ becomes Lord in our life. There's no more acting.

I spoke yesterday how God detests hypocrisy, pretending to be spiritual when we're not really that inside. We're trying to give an impression to people when it's not really true inside. But God is so faithful.

If you really walk with God, he will show you your failures. That's a wonderful thing. A good teacher will show you where you're getting wrong.

That's not the way, my son, to do that mathematics problem. That's not good English. That sentence doesn't sound right.

It's not good English. A good teacher will explain where you went wrong. And like that, God arranges circumstances in our life where we discover where our failure is.

For example, I mentioned earlier in an earlier session about getting offended. In the Psalms, it says in Psalm 119, blessed is he, great peace of those who love thy law. Nothing will offend them.

You read that in Psalm 119. Great peace of those who love thy law. Nothing will offend them.

And I say, Lord, the way I know I love your word, according to that verse, is that nothing will offend me. And Jesus said also, blessed is he who is not offended in me. Getting offended because somebody said something to me, or did not say something to me, did not smile at me after the church service, or did not shake my hand, or walked past me ignoring me, who do you think you are that everybody should bow down to you? It's such conceit to think that I'm so important, that everybody must smile at me, and everyone must shake my hand.

If you humble yourself, there is no problem. It's because we have high thoughts about ourselves that we get offended. I'm absolutely convinced about it.

A truly humble person will never, never get offended. Even if he's kicked. You know the difference between kicking a snake and kicking a worm? Have you ever tried it? I mean, don't try it with a snake, but try it with a worm.

If you kick a snake, it rears up its head to sting you. Try and kick a small worm. You know what it does? It just curls up and doesn't do a thing.

The Bible says about Jesus when he hung upon the cross, Psalm 22, verse 6, I am a worm. They treated him like a worm. Psalm 22 is a psalm which begins with my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And then it goes on in verse 6 to say, I'm a worm.

They treat me like a worm. And Jesus' reaction was better than a worm's. He not only curled up, but he said, Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.

So if we get offended, there is only one reason for it. Pride. If you get offended with something your wife did at home or did not do, offended with what some brother did or did not do, it's pride, brother, in you.

Forget about the other person. He may be arrogant or she may be arrogant or proud, whatever it is. But you are proud.

And when I understood that, I said, Lord, this seems to me the kindergarten lesson in overcoming pride. I mentioned yesterday about the things that God hates, Jesus hates. You remember the verse I started with yesterday? Have you forgotten it? If not, let me remind you.

Hebrews chapter 1, we're talking about the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews chapter 1 in verse 9, referring to Jesus, he was anointed with oil, that is the oil of the Holy Spirit, more than his brothers, because he loved righteousness and hated sin more than the others. So because Jesus loved righteousness and hated sin more than others, that's why he was anointed more than us.

And the degree of anointing that each of us gets is not going to be the same. The degree of anointing that another brother gets may be more than me, more than mine. I may have a certain degree of anointing and that brother will get more.

Why is God favoring him? God is not favoring him. God did not even favor Jesus. He treated Jesus just like he treated us and as an ordinary person was to be tempted like us and he'd be anointed depending on how much he loved righteousness and hated sin.

And so it says here, because he loved righteousness more than others, he got anointed more than others. Because he hated sin more than others, he got anointed more than others. So then we need to see, what was it that Jesus hated? I want to hate those things so that I can be anointed too.

And we saw yesterday one of the primary things he hated was hypocrisy, pretense. We have to hate it with all of our hearts. Lord, I never want to give an impression to people that I am something that I am not.

See what Paul had such a fear in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. He was once taken up to the third heaven, 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse, he refers to it in the third person but he's actually talking about himself. He said, I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago, in the body, 1 Corinthians 12 verse 2, 14 years ago he was taken up to the third heaven.

The third heaven is the immediate presence of God. Paul was taken up in his spirit. His body was here.

He was taken up in his spirit to the third heaven. Imagine moving around with the angels in heaven and then coming back to earth. And I mean if that happened to us we'd be testifying about it the next day.

But Paul spoke, kept quiet about it for 14 years. Because he was not going to boast about that. Imagine some fantastic experience happened to you.

Don't you find an itch in it to immediately, when's the next church meeting where I can talk about this? That I was taken up to the third heaven. But not Paul. He did not want anything of that.

He says, 14 years ago it happened. And I'm not going to tell you anything about what I saw or heard there because I heard verse 4, listen to this, very important words. Inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak.

2 Corinthians 12 verse 4. Inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak. If you go to the internet and look for people who have gone up to heaven and come back, there are lots of people. I don't believe any one of them.

I'll tell you why. Because they tell us what they heard and saw. And that proves they're telling a lie.

Because Paul said you're not permitted to speak of anything you saw there. The people who have really gone to heaven never talk about it. He may mention here that he went up.

But Paul, what did you hear there? Can you tell us a little bit of what you experienced there? Just to satisfy my curiosity? No. He said I'm not permitted to speak about what I saw there. That's the mark of a person who's gone to heaven.

There are people who say they went to hell and come back. It's not true. It's appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.

If a man's gone to hell, that's it. So I don't believe all these hundreds of stories in the internet that tell about people who went to heaven and came back, went to hell and came back. Absolute nonsense.

Especially they talk about it. They make money out of it. Writing books on it.

Paul said I'm not permitted to speak about it. But then he goes on to say the reason is, verse 6, less people think about me more than I really am. See verse 6? If I boast about it, I'll be foolish.

Because if I speak about it, but I refrain from talking about it so that no one will credit me with more than what I really am. He says people if they hear about this, they say wow, what a man, Paul. He said I don't want people to say that.

So 14 years he kept quiet about it. And even here he writes about it so that the Corinthians will at least accept that he's an apostle. Because they didn't accept him.

That's why he wanted to establish that. And says because of all these things, God also gave me a thorn in the flesh, verse 7, to humble me, to keep me down. Do you know that even the Apostle Paul, the great mighty Apostle Paul, was in danger of spiritual pride? If any of you born again believers think you're not in danger of spiritual pride, you're fooling yourself.

Even if you were converted one year ago, or you were converted 60 years ago like me, we are in danger of spiritual pride in giving people an impression about ourselves which is beyond what we really are. And pride about boasting, giving a testimony about what we have done or what we experienced, not with the intention of glorifying God, not with the intention of telling people what the Lord is doing in some place, but

letting people know that I was the one whom God used over there. It's to exalt oneself.

There's so much of that tendency in the race of Adam to exalt oneself, to show oneself. So Paul says God had to give him a thorn in the flesh to humble him, to keep me, verse 7, from exalting myself. See the last part of verse 7. And you say, Paul, such a mighty man of God like you, were you in danger of becoming proud and exalting yourself? Paul says, I'll be honest.

I was in danger because God had used me so mightily and given me such revelations, and God did something in me to keep me humble. Why was God so keen in giving Paul a permanent thorn in the flesh to keep him humble? For one reason. There's a law of God like the law of gravity.

Anywhere you go in the world, law of gravity pulls things down. And the law of God teaches us that pride always brings people down. It's like the law of gravity.

And humility will lift a person up to God. That's a law. It doesn't matter who you are.

I mean, if you jump off the roof of this building, the law of gravity is not going to check up whether you're a believer or not a believer. It just operates irrespective of who you are. And the same way with humility and pride.

If you humble yourself, you'll get grace whoever you are. You may be in some dead Christian denomination. There are believers, born-again believers in some useless Christian denominations that don't preach the truth.

I believe there are born-again believers in the Roman Catholic Church. I've met some of them. And I believe there are first-class hypocrites in CFC churches, including this church, I'm sure.

Because in every church there are hypocrites. If Jesus had a church with one hypocrite and a humbug called Judas Iscariot sitting there, there's no church better than that. Every church has got hypocrites.

And in every church you'll find some saintly man or woman. So the law of gravity does not depend on which church you belong to. Then why do we say we should leave some church and go to another? Because we must go to a church that preaches the whole truth of God, not to a church that preaches ten percent of the truth.

I ask people, which school would you like to send your children to? If all the schools were free, no school fees in any school, every school teaching was free, completely free, which school would you send your children to in your locality? You would certainly send your child to the school that has the best education, right? Why don't you choose a church like that? I know in India, many people say, oh, this is the church my father used to go to, this is the church my grandfather used to go to. And I say, do you send your child to the same school your grandfather went to? No, no, no. We have better schools today.

There are better churches today, too. Or I say, take another example. A church is also like a school.

Another example is a church is like a hospital. We are all sick people, sick to a greater or lesser degree. That means if we have not become completely like Christ, there is some sickness in us.

We are not 100 percent healthy. And the church is a hospital where we are treating people. We don't have any perfectly healthy people, not even one.

I'm not perfectly healthy. I've not become like Christ 100 percent. But we have a hospital where we are treating patients who are becoming better and better if they listen to the treatment prescribed by the doctors.

If they don't take the medicines prescribed by the doctors, then they will not become better. But if they take the treatment prescribed by the doctors, they will become better. So we go to a hospital where there are sick people, but where the doctors are good doctors giving the best medicines.

Isn't that the place where you would like to send your, you want to send your children to a hospital if all the hospitals were free? Which hospital would you choose? You would choose the one which has got the best doctors. All the hospitals have got sick people. You won't say, I want to go to a hospital where there are no sick people.

There's no such hospital. There's no such church where everybody is perfect. So don't say, oh, there are some imperfect people in that church, so I don't go there.

That's like saying, there are some sick people in that hospital, so I don't go there. Then you'll never go to any hospital. And every church has got imperfect people.

I'll tell you that. The best churches in the world have got imperfect people. It's like a hospital.

But what do we see in a hospital? Not the condition of the patients, but the doctors and the treatment of the doctors. Do you find an improvement in these patients? Are they getting better? Ah, that's the hospital I want to send my child to. And that's the church I want to send to, where the preachers are preaching the whole truth of God.

And where the people who go there become better people. Where the children who go there become better children. Because the treatment is good.

So that's the difference between one church and another church. So we don't claim to be a church without any hypocrites or without any sick people. We have a lot of sick people.

But we say, the treatment we give in our church is top class. Because we go by the medical manual completely, 100%. Agree with it 100% and teach it 100%.

So people are treated and they become better and better and better. But I've heard this also, many people in my own country say, but I say, why do you go to this church? Because my father and grandfather belong to that church. I ask the same question.

If your child is sick, will you send your child to the hospital your grandmother went to? Where they don't have any facilities they have like in modern hospitals? No. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. I will send him to the best hospital available today.

I say the best church available today is far better than the one your grandfather and grandmother went to. That's why I left many churches. I grew up in what is called the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church.

That's the church I was born into. They pray to Mary. They pray for the dead.

They give money to the church to get souls out of hell and all that type of stuff. There are churches like that. And I belong to that.

I grew up like that in that. And of course, I didn't follow all that because my father was born again. But that was a church nominally.

That's what I belonged to. They swing incense in the middle of the church service and all types of things. And it's worse than Old Covenant.

And then I got born again. Then I came to another church. Then I found that they did not, I got baptized.

They didn't preach the power of the Holy Spirit. Then I left that and went to another church. And I went somewhere else because they didn't preach holiness here.

So somebody told me, Brother Zach, you seem to be a very unstable person. You go from one church to another church to another church. I said, all my life I've been unstable.

I went to first grade. Then I left it and went to the second grade. I left that and went to the third grade.

I was not like these rock steady people who stay in kindergarten all their life. Rock steady, never moved. I was not like that.

I moved all my life. I moved to something better, something higher all the time. And if I find something better today, I'll move even now because I want the best in my life for the Lord.

That's why I am where I am because it's the best church I've found. That's why I am where I am. And I would say, I don't know where you folks live, but I hope it's the best church in your hometown.

Do you know there are numerous people who have come to conferences like this who moved from their hometown, gave up their jobs, gave up their home, came here just to be a part of this church. There are some people sitting right here who are like that. Why did they do that? Because they wanted to be in a good church.

I'm not asking all of you to move. Don't misunderstand me. But I'm saying there were some people who felt that God led them to move to a place where they could really be built up and not be in some dead church system and ease their conscience saying, I'm going to a church.

They wanted their children not to just be believers. They wanted their children to grow in grace and count for God in their earthly life. I remember when my four boys were growing up, I said, Lord, I don't want them to just be believers.

I don't want them just to get baptized that I get a reputation that, oh, Brother Zach's children are born again and baptized. I couldn't care less for that. I'm not interested in that.

I said, Lord, I want my children to be wholehearted disciples of Jesus who make a difference on this earth for the kingdom of God. Not just drift along as Christians and not just that they sing songs well or know the Bible, but they make a difference for God on this earth. And then now they have children and I pray for my grandchildren now.

I say, Lord, they also must count for God when they grow up. They must count for God in their life. Their lives must count for God when they grow up.

Do you pray for your children like that? Do you have a longing for it? Lord, I want my children to grow up to be witnesses for you. And if you've got grandchildren, they will become witnesses for God. That proves that you really are gripped by the truth of God.

You want that desperately and you want them to go just like you'd send them to the best school and the best hospital. You want them to be in the best church and they grow up. That's what I wanted.

And I tell you, I don't regret. And I said, Lord, can you give me a promise for that? It's amazing. You ask God for a promise and he gives you a promise.

I told you earlier the promises he gave me when I was getting old. I read that to you in my last, in the last session. So I said, Lord, can you give me something for my children and grandchildren? He said, sure.

When I, when my wife and I were first married and we had children, there was a promise the Lord gave us. Now you can claim that too for your children because it's in your Bible too. But interestingly, the Lord gave that promise to both of us in Isaiah 54.

And we claimed it. If you get a promise in scripture and you don't claim it, it's like somebody gave you a check for a million dollars and you framed it up and put it on your wall. What are you going to get? Zero.

What do you do with a check? You don't frame it up and put it on the wall. You write your name behind it and cash it in the bank. So here's a check.

I don't know whether you put your name on it and cashed it. Isaiah 54 13. All your children will be disciplined.

The word in the margin is disciplined, will be made disciples by the Lord himself. The Lord himself will make your children his disciples. I said, wow.

And the well-being of your children will be great. Spiritual well-being, physical well-being, mental well-being. It'll be great because man is spirit, soul and body.

Wonderful. Well, we claimed it. My wife and I used to pray for that and said, Lord, here's a check.

We put our amen behind it and we cash it. Because I'll tell you why. Turn with me to second Corinthians in chapter one.

I like to show everything from scripture so that, you know, faith does not rest on the wisdom of a man, but on the word of God. Second Corinthians one verse 20. You know what it says here? All the promises of God in Christ, they are yes.

That means Christ has signed his name to every check, which is every promise in the Bible. It's a signed check with Jesus Christ's name on it. It'll be cashed in the bank of heaven.

But just like when you get a check, you got to endorse it at the back with your signature. Put it into my account, you say, and you put your signature there. It says in the latter part of that verse, you got to say amen to that promise.

That's your part. That's signing your name behind that check. Jesus has signed on the front, but you must sign at the back by saying amen.

So here's a check signed by Jesus Christ, which came to us, to my wife and me. Sent from heaven through the word of God. Your children will be made disciples by the Lord Jesus Christ and their well-being will be great.

What did we do? We signed our name at the back and said amen. It's going to be sold for our children. Do you think the bank of heaven cashed it? It certainly did.

Then I said, what about my grandchildren, Lord? I want to pray for them too. I keep studying the Bible for promises. So I read in Isaiah 59 and verse 21.

As for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord, my spirit, my Holy Spirit, which is upon you and my words, which I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth. And it will be in the mouth of your children. And it will be in the mouth of your grandchildren.

Wow. Imagine a specific word. When you ask God for a specific word, he gives you a specific word.

There's so much in this Bible. My brothers and sisters, I feel sorry for people who don't read it. If you read the internet more than you read the Bible, you're missing such a lot.

And your children will suffer. Your family life suffers. So much of your life suffers because you don't know the promises of God.

You're not cashing the checks of heaven in your life. God wants to build godly families. And with godly families, he builds a godly church, a church which is an example in godliness.

And that's why in our churches, we emphasize that women must dress modestly. The Bible says that. Very important.

I want, the Holy Spirit says, I want the women, 1 Timothy chapter 2, 1 Timothy chapter 2, it's part of building the church. The church that Jesus is building, all women will dress in proper clothing, modestly, discreetly. 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 9. It's the words of the Holy Spirit.

I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing. A lot of women adorn themselves with a lot of gold and pearls and jewelry, it says there. But that's not the main thing.

The main thing is adorn yourself. It's an adornment to be dressed modestly and discreetly and properly. And you know, we live in a world where women are encouraged to show off more and more of their body and to wear tighter and tighter dresses to show the outline of their bodies to lusting men who are hanging around everywhere.

The world is full of lusting men. It's built into men to lust after women. Everyone, when they are born again, they fight to overcome it, but it's still a battle.

I'll tell you that. For most people who haven't overcome it fully, sitting in church are men who are still baffling with it. Please don't, sisters, please don't come into church and be an agent of Satan to enable those men to lust after you.

They may not say anything, just with their looks, they're tempted because of your immodest dress, the amount of skin you expose, the tight way you show off your figure. You have become an agent of Satan. You didn't know it till today, know it today.

Be modest. So, then you say, Brother Zach, can you define modesty for me? I'm not a tailor to tell you how long your skirt should be or any such thing or how tight your dress should be, but I'll tell you this. Here's the best way.

This is what I teach people in my own church. If you, as a lady, one day Jesus Christ physically comes to your house and says, I want you to go for a walk with me today through the town, and you're going to walk physically with Jesus Christ in your town, how would you dress? If you're going to walk with Jesus physically through the town, if you were in Nazareth or somewhere in Israel and you went for a walk with Jesus, how would you dress? Ask the Lord to show you. Dress like that, not only when you come to the church meeting, but when you go to work.

Don't you want Jesus to come with you when you go to work? Boy, you need Jesus more in your place of work than when you come to the church meeting. Let him be with you always. Does he have to be embarrassed? Somebody says, Lord, is that your sister? Well, he says she is, but I'm a bit embarrassed to call her my sister.

Do you want Jesus to talk about you like that? In a world where, you know, when I see in my own home church some sisters, young sisters who go to college dressed so modestly, so different from the other girls in college, I tell them, I'm proud of you, my girls. You're like my daughters. Every girl in my church is like my daughter.

And I say, I'm proud of you, my daughters. The way you dress, the way you go to college, and you are different, and people make fun of you because they say you're old-fashioned. This is not the style today.

Well, it isn't, but it's the style that my Lord approves of. And there you are different. Are you afraid to be different? Are you ashamed? I remember when I was in the Navy, and people would make fun of me.

All my followers, officers, would drink, and they'd be always dancing on the floor and drinking and playing, gambling and all that, and I would have no part in it. And I would be made fun of. Those are the days I got spiritual backbone, when I could stand that, being made fun of.

And I say, I don't go around preaching to people, but if they come and ask me, then I will tell them. So in a Naval officer's function where everybody would be dancing and drinking, I stand with my glass of orange juice, and somebody comes to me and says, Hey, Zach, why are you drinking orange juice? And I say, Okay, you asked for it. I'm going to give you the gospel now.

I'm not going around proclaiming the gospel. You asked for it, right? So you started the conversation. I'm going to give you the answer.

Why I'm drinking orange juice, when all of you are drinking whiskey and all the other type of stuff? Because Jesus Christ has come into my life. I remember once I had to go to the commanding officer of my ship, who was a Roman Catholic. Wherever I go, I say, Lord, please make me a witness to everybody.

I don't want to be obnoxious by going up and preaching to people, but I say, Lord, open a door, and I will take it. A little window of opportunity, and I'll take it. So there was a second in command who was a non-Christian who hated me, because I was very upright in my work, and he was always looking for something to punish me for.

So one day they appointed me as the wine secretary of the naval officer's mess. That means the one who was to order all the whiskey and everything. We had to take it in turns, each officer.

So I said, Sir, I can't do that job. I'm a Christian. I don't drink whiskey, and I don't order whiskey for anybody else either.

He says, well, then I have to report you to the commanding officer and march you in before him and have you punished. I said, all right, Sir. So he marched me in before the commanding officer, four-stripe man, and he asked me, well, Lieutenant Poonen, why aren't you willing to do this job? I said, Sir, I don't drink and I don't order drinks for anyone.

I'm a Christian. He laughed, and he said, I'm also a Christian. He was a Roman Catholic, you see.

I'm also a Christian. Ah, I got my opportunity. You see, listen, he asked for it, remember? I said, Sir, I also thought I was a Christian because I was born in a Christian family.

But the time came in my life when I repented of my sin and received Jesus Christ as my Savior. That's when I became a Christian. There, I got the opportunity.

If you don't stand up for the Lord, you will not get an opportunity to witness to others. Yeah, you know, I'm thankful for those days, and I believe those are the days when the Lord saw my willingness to stand for the Lord. And when I was 24 years old, the Lord said, I want you to quit the Navy and come and serve me full time.

That was the greatest honor I ever got in my life, to get the promotion right up to the top, being a servant of the Lord. You don't know what you're missing when you don't stand for the Lord. When you're looking for some earthly gain or advancement, and because you're afraid you might lose that promotion or lose that good recommendation, you keep quiet about your Christian witness.

You hope nobody knows that you're a Christian. And you go around like that, ashamed of Christ, who was not ashamed to hang on the cross for you. Many times I would think of that.

I said, Lord Jesus, you were not ashamed to hang on the cross for me. Half naked, lying there, everybody mocking at you. I will never be ashamed of you.

Wherever I am, I let people know I'm a Christian. I will not make myself obnoxious. But everybody will know I'm a Christian.

I'll carry a Bible with me when I go out in the evening so that people would see I have my Bible in my bag and go out to the meeting. And once one of the junior sailors asked me, sir, are you an insurance agent? You're always going around with his bag. I said, yes, I am.

I'm insuring people for eternity. And Alex, and Alex, he asked for it. So I'll explain to you how you can be insured for eternity.

People are always asking me to give them the gospel. What shall I do? And if you stand up for Christ, you will get that opportunity. I'll tell you that.

And that's how we build the church, not by making us obnoxious to other people, no, but being a light. You know, Jesus said, you're the salt of the earth and the light of the world. You know one thing common about

salt and light? They never make a sound.

See these lights burning? If a bulb is making a sound, you know it's packing up. There's something wrong with it. Good bulbs don't make sound, but they give light.

Salt, it never makes a sound, but you put one spoon of food in your mouth and you know whether there's salt or not. You know immediately whether there's salt in food. You know, you enter a room, you know immediately whether it's dark or light.

That's how a Christian must be. Our life must shine like light and be like salt that when you move into a place, they immediately know. Here are a bunch of people cracking filthy jokes and you walk in there and they stop.

Why do they stop? You didn't tell them to stop, but they know who you are. I've had people who worked with me 50 years ago in the Navy and they meet me now in some retired Naval Officer's function and they remember me. Oh, Zach, we remember how you quit everything when you had such great prospects 50 years ago.

They know. I had one officer who when he was dying in the hospital, somebody met him and that man told me, Zach, he was thinking of you. Because I was the only one who reminded him of eternity.

And when you're dying in a hospital, you think of eternity. And you think of somebody who told you about eternity somewhere, maybe five years earlier. It's a wonderful thing to be a witness for Christ.

I tell you in eternity, you'll never regret it. Maybe I lost promotion. Maybe I lost good recommendations.

I didn't get the salary I was supposed to get. I could have got promotion, but that doesn't matter. What will it be in eternity when I see these people? I don't want anybody to turn around to me in eternity and say, Zach, you knew I was going to hell and you never even tried to be a witness to me.

You didn't love me. You just let me go to hell. I don't want anybody to say that.

I used to have in my office as a naval officer, I used to have a Bible on my table. People knew what I was. I was not ashamed of it.

I'd hang a calendar with a Christian verse on it. Never ashamed to be a Christian. I had verses on my scooter.

I'm not asking you to do that, but I was not ashamed to be a Christian. Look at all these people who have bumper stickers, all foolish, silly things they write on the bumper stickers. If they can do that, why can't you be a witness for Christ? Are you ashamed? So many people, I tell you, who shout loud in the church and sing praises and raise their hands, they are ashamed to be a witness in their place of work.

No wonder God does not approve of them or back them up when they are in need. They go begging, Oh God, please do something for me. And it appears as though God doesn't even hear.

You're ashamed of him. You know what the Lord said? If anyone is ashamed of me, I will be ashamed of him. I never want to hear that in the day of judgment, where the Lord says, I'm ashamed of you because in your entire life you are ashamed to stand up for me.

I want to ask all of you a straight question. Is it only in the church that you let everybody know that you're a Christian, singing loudly, raising your hands? What about in your place of work? Do people know that you're a Christian? As I told you, not by making yourself obnoxiously, you know, making life difficult for them by your preaching Christ all the time, but being like a light that everybody knows you're different, that you will not do anything corrupt. I remember when somebody came and asked me whether a fellow believer, Brother Zach, can you sign this as a witness for me? I read through that statement and I said, Brother, your conscience may permit you to sign this, but this is not 100% correct and I cannot sign it as a witness.

I'm sorry. I'm a Christian. You can get offended with me if you like.

He was a good brother, but I will not sign this. And you know what he did? He did not sign it himself. He said, I respect Brother Zach.

If he doesn't sign it, there must be something wrong with this. And it saved him. God gave him something better when he gave up that.

Oh, he always gives you something better when you refuse something which is crooked and not right. So I want to say that many of us are missing the best because we choose the second best. I want to encourage all of you.

We want to build a church where everyone is upright, living for Christ in their personal life, being a witness for Christ, and building fellowship by denying themselves, being like these joints. Fellowship with everybody. You want to, you want to pull something from me, Brother? I'm ready to yield.

I will not fight with you. I'm ready to yield. You want to take something? Yield.

Take it. I will not fight with you. That's the type of fellowship we want to build between husband and wife and between brother and brother and sister and sister.

And I pray there'll be many such churches in this land. Do you know how many letters I get emails? I get so many emails every day. Believe it.

I'm telling you honestly, every single day my inbox is full with emails from different parts of the world, people writing, responding to the internet and the messages. And I have so, a number of letters, emails from America saying, Brother Zhang, I don't find a church like yours in my locality. Some say we'd like to move to Bangalore.

I said, sorry, you won't get a visa that easily to come to India. They're very strict about that. But you pray that God will give you fellowship with at least one person, one family in your locality, whom you can meet together and be a witness for Christ.

Start with one family. If you have a longing that fellowship will be built. I was more shy than all of you.

They don't believe it now, but I say when you get filled with the Spirit, you become, you become changed. But I was more shy than anybody else. But I said, Lord, fill me with the Spirit.

I don't want to be ashamed of you. And that's how my witness for Christ started. You just go to the Lord and say, Lord, I don't want to be ashamed of you.

Where I live, where I work, you young people in school and in college, I'm not going to be ashamed of you, Lord Jesus. I want to be a light for you. I don't want to make a noise and make myself a nuisance by always talking about Christ.

But I'll be such a light that people will say, hey, there's something different in you. What's the reason? And then you'll get an opportunity to witness. But be a witness for Christ.

The world needs that in America, which is drifting so much into non-Christian parts and ways in Christendom. All types of things happening in churches today, starting with divorce, which should never be heard of in a Christian church. We have in all of our churches, we have not had a single divorce in all these 44 years.

If you preach the truth, you will not have it. Not a single couple in our church has divorced in 44 years. And we have 75 to 100 churches.

And even if we have 1,000 churches, if you preach the truth, there will be no divorce there. Because we preach the truth and some people get offended and go. And the other people who get offended and go and get divorced.

But if they stay in the church and stick to hearing the truth, there will be no divorce. I can predict that. Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you, the coming of the Lord is near.

Don't have a regret when the day Christ comes that you've not lived for him. Say, Lord, the rest of the days that are there, I want to live for you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, please help us, everyone here. I believe there are a lot of sincere people bowed their head before you now. Many who are ashamed or afraid to be witnesses.

Please fill them with the Holy Spirit. And like you took that timid, fearful set of apostles and changed them into fiery witnesses through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I pray that many here will be baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire and set aflame for the Lord.

Do it, Lord, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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