

Building the Church Through Sacrifice

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual things over earthly things and the need for godly leaders to guide the church towards spiritual things.

Duration: 1:10:20

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Sacrificial Living", "Church Building"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of building Jerusalem, a church characterized by sacrifice, devotion to Jesus Christ, and a spirit of selflessness. It contrasts the spirit of Babylon, focused on personal gain and worldly pursuits. The call is to embrace a life of sacrifice, obedience to God's will, and a devotion to Christ, following the examples of missionaries and biblical figures who lived sacrificially for the sake of the gospel.

Transcript

We spoke the other day about Jerusalem being the bride of Christ and Babylon being the harlot city right at the end of the Bible. We see that's a picture of two types of churches. One is called the spirit of the harlot.

That means they say they are engaged to Jesus Christ. Not married yet. Marriage is still to come.

But while they are engaged to Jesus, they fool around with money, sinful pleasure, they watch pornography. Their aim and ambition is on earth. They care for the approval of men more than the approval of Jesus Christ.

These are all marks of the harlot. I mean, if your wife is more interested in what some other man thinks about her than what you think about her, she is a harlot. She may not give her body to that man, but she's got the spirit of a harlot.

And any Christian who is more concerned what another man thinks about him or her than what Jesus thinks about him or her is a harlot. I have no hesitation in saying that. If you are more concerned what a man thinks about you, even what I think about you, than what Jesus thinks about you, you've got the spirit of a harlot.

Now, I'm not saying that the opinions of godly men are unimportant. You've often heard me say, the opinions of men are fit for the trash can, the rubbish bin, the garbage dump. What people think about you, throw it in the garbage dump.

But there's one exception. If a man like the Apostle Paul, if I were living in Paul's time, and Paul told me, Zach, I think there's something wrong with you. I would never throw that in the trash can.

Because I'd have such a respect for this godly man, Paul, that I'd say, boy, I'll never throw that in the trash can. This is going to be my salvation. Probably a word of rebuke from the Lord himself, like when John wrote to the elders in Revelation.

I mean, it was the Lord, but it was John who wrote it. And if they took it seriously, if they threw those letters in the trash can, they would be the losers. What John wrote was scripture.

So there is an exception, that the opinions of all men are fit for the trash can, except the opinions of someone whom you know is a really godly man, who knows God, and whose opinion about you may be really valuable, to save you from calamity. Like it says in the Psalms, Let the righteous smite me. It's like oil upon my head.

It's a great verse in the Psalms. So, Babylon and Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, there's a lot about Babylon and Jerusalem.

And so, studying the Old Testament, in relation to Babylon and Jerusalem, can be very profitable. In fact, if you go to our CFC website, we've got a verse-by-verse study, called Babylon to Jerusalem, that started with Daniel, who prayed. All movement from Babylon to Jerusalem, even today, starts with prayer.

And the moving of the Holy Spirit. The CFC was born in prayer. And in the early days, we had days of fasting and prayer.

Regularly, every holiday, we had fasting and prayer as a church. And there were days when, Ian and I, we'd pray individually, fast and pray for some days, to seek the way forward. And, that's how it was.

Daniel fasted and prayed, and started the movement, that began Babylon to Jerusalem. Then it continued, with Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Nehemiah, all the way, to building the temple. And then, Nehemiah with the walls.

And then, the study continues on, there to Malachi, where a few years later, they've again gone astray. This is the story of Christianity. God raises up people.

In those days, it was Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra was a teacher. Haggai and Zechariah were prophets. And, this is after Daniel's time.

They led the movement, from Babylon to Jerusalem. We've got lessons to learn from that. So, I would encourage you, if you're serious about it, go to those studies called Babylon to Jerusalem.

It's on our website. You can freely access it. I want to show you something.

All scripture is inspired by God. I want to show you an inspired portion of scripture. In Ezra, chapter 2. It speaks here, in Ezra chapter 2, verse 1, of the movement from Babylon to Jerusalem.

From the movement from a harlot church, to the bridal church. And, that is the way CFC began. People were fed up with the harlot system, and moved to a bridal system.

Now, the great danger is, that as our numbers have increased, there can be people with the spirit of the harlot, sitting right in CFC churches. That's the great danger. We have to fight against, expose constantly, the spirit of the harlot.

You see, the church will be preserved in the right way, if the leaders are godly, and don't have the spirit of the harlot. But, you cannot prevent people with the spirit of the harlot sitting in your church. Even Jesus' church, there was one guy with the spirit of the harlot.

Judas Iscariot. We can't have a purer church than Jesus had. So, the best church in the world, will have somebody like Judas Iscariot, some hypocrite, some harlot person.

You cannot have a totally pure church. Even Jesus didn't have it. But, such a person gets exposed.

He doesn't stay on till the end. And we've seen that happen again, and again, and again, and again, in CFC churches, where the word of God is preached strongly, that over a period of time, people get exposed. I say, if there's a hypocrisy in your life, you better go in some other church, because one day or the other, you'll get exposed, and you'll be put to shame publicly.

Because, it says, in Isaiah 33, who can dwell with the everlasting burnings? The hypocrites in Zion are trembling and are afraid. That's how Zion must be. But, coming to Ezra chapter 2, these are the people who came up from Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem, in the first verse.

And then, they came with the leaders, Zerubbabel, and so on. And then, inspired scripture. The number of the men are the people, the sons of Perosh, 2,172, and the sons of Shepheti, 3,372.

You get bored, right, going through this list? And you say, why in the world has God given a list like this? 128 of the men of Anathoth, 42 of the sons of Asmaveth, 52 of the sons of Nebo, to teach me one lesson. Maybe two. One that God keeps in exact count, even today, of those who leave Babylon and move to Jerusalem.

And the names of their fathers, because the fathers are the ones who taught them, get out of Babylon. You know, Babylon was a much more comfortable place to live in. Jerusalem was shambles, like a desert, destroyed.

And if people went there, they had to, it's like going into a desert and starting to live there, grow grain, and build your houses, etc. But Babylon is a very comfortable life. They could have said, well, we can stay here itself, and worship God.

God is everywhere. They could have used so much of logic and reason. But they knew that God had said, after 70 years, you've got to go back to Babylon, to Jerusalem.

And they obeyed. And the fathers, I like the names of these people, the sons of so-and-so, the sons of so-and-so, the fathers were probably old, but they taught their children, listen, don't stay in Babylon. I praise God for fathers and mothers in CFC churches who have taught their children the difference between Babylon and Jerusalem.

Don't leave it to the church. Don't leave it to the Sunday school to teach your children. We had a Sunday school in CFC, but I never expected my children to learn things from Sunday school.

Fathers, teach your children. Give them the instruction of the Lord. Very, very important.

So that's, it's inspired scripture, teaching us this thing. These two things. One, exact list of people who moved to Jerusalem, and the second lesson is, fathers took the responsibility.

Turn with me now to Isaiah, the verse I quoted just now. In Isaiah, chapter 33, Zion is a picture of the true church, and it says in verse 14, Sinners in Zion are terrified. Trembling has seized the godless.

Who can live with the consuming fire? Who can live with continual burning? The church must be a place where there's a continual burning. Where God lives in the midst is a consuming fire. The Bible says in Hebrews 12, our God is a consuming fire.

And any church which does not have a continual burning of the Holy Spirit, consuming fire of God in the midst, is very soon going to become Babylon. All your clever sermons and beautiful illustrations and explanations and typologies and all that will not preserve your church. None of all this.

It's the consuming fire of the presence of God. The Lord says to Zachariah, I will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem. That is the wall we need.

Where God himself is a wall of fire around about us and protects the church from sinking into Babylon. So who can live in such a church? Verse 15, Those who walk righteously and speak with sincerity. Not perfect, but sincere.

Sincere means there's no hypocrisy in them. Do you know that the Lord told Nathaniel, an unconverted Jew, said about him, there is no hypocrisy in him. What a wonderful testimony.

There's a man without guile. I read that in John chapter 1 and I said, Lord, if you can say that about me all my life, I'd be delighted. A man may not be perfect, but without any hypocrisy.

He is what you see he is. He's not another thing in private or behaving in some other way somewhere else. He is what you see.

Like they say in the computer language, what you see is what you get. What you see is exactly what he is in private. So sincerity and one who rejects unjust gain, who never takes a bribe, never does anything unrighteous in his business, never cheats anybody.

He'd rather be poor than become rich through dishonesty. He's very faithful with money and doesn't take a bribe and he doesn't listen to he shuts his ears from hearing gossip. That's the meaning of hearing about bloodshed.

Gossip is somebody killing somebody with words and you're listening to it. And those who live in consuming fire shut their ears. And you know the best way to kill gossip? When somebody comes and says something evil about you, about somebody else, say something nice about that person.

I guarantee the criticism will stop. Now if you're an elder brother, it's different. If you're an elder, you need to hear when somebody has a complaint against someone.

You need to hear if somebody is pointing out that that brother is going astray. I would listen to it all the time because I can help that person. But if you're not an elder and somebody comes to you with that sort of story, just tell them what you're saying may be right brother, I don't know but I can't do anything about it.

Why don't you please go to the elders and tell them this? I can't do anything to that person or help him. But if you're really concerned about him, go to the elders. So when an elder brother listens to something about another person, it's not gossip.

Otherwise you can't help anybody if people are not free to come to you. And shuts his eyes, verse 15 last part, from looking upon evil. You know, you can live with the consuming fire if you just read verse 15 and meditate on it.

It's a wonderful verse. Think about how it applies to you. Then you will dwell on the heights.

You'll dwell in the heavenly places. And your refuge will be there, an impregnable rock. And you will always get spiritual bread and water.

You'll never never starve. You'll never never thirst. Because God will supply you.

So, what is the essential message that we preach? I told you the other day that Babylon and Jerusalem started in the Garden of Eden with the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. So we looked at Babylon and Jerusalem in Revelation chapter 17 to 21. Now let's go back to Genesis and see the Tree of Knowledge, good and evil and the Tree of Life.

Because these are the two the origin of Babylon and Jerusalem. Here was a tree that God had forbidden. And here was a Tree of Life.

God didn't tell Adam specifically go and eat it. But he said there's a Tree of Life. And if he was interested in life he would have gone there.

But like all most Christians they are interested in knowledge. I have a feeling I don't want to criticize you brothers and sisters but my observation after observing many many believers in CFC churches is that they are more interested in knowledge than life. I'm sorry to say that.

I hope I'm wrong but I have a fear that I'm right. You ask yourself are you more interested in knowledge? Do you listen to messages to get knowledge? Or life? Adam went for knowledge and you see what was the result? Knowledge of good and evil. Not doing evil.

Knowledge of good and evil. Even that knowledge can kill you if you don't have life. There is a knowledge of good and evil that comes through life.

And there is a knowledge of good and evil that comes through study and hearing messages. The knowledge of good and evil that comes through life makes you very sensitive. You understand evil which is not written in the books.

There is a knowledge of good and evil that comes through study and listening to sermons will show you certain things that are wrong and you avoid all those things and you'll be like a pharisee thinking that you're better than everybody else. There is a person who gets knowledge of good and evil through life. He's discovering it constantly.

His head will be bowed in the dust before God. Because he's constantly discovering things that he needs to cleanse himself from. So when people accuse us of false doctrine you know there are many many people who say they said that about Jesus.

They wouldn't allow him to preach in the synagogue because he's a false teacher. But they couldn't explain because Jesus said this is what the scripture says but they said it's not aligned with our tradition. And he says you reject the word of God to keep your tradition.

Then Jesus went on to heaven. Then Paul took over. And you know what they said about Paul? Listen to this.

Turn to the last chapter of Acts of the Apostles. Acts 28. The last chapter of Acts of the Apostles Paul was sitting with a lot of people and in Rome some of the Jewish people and he was trying to explain the gospel to them.

And they were willing to listen. And they, the Jews said to him in verse 22 We desire to Acts 28.22 We desire to hear from you what your views are. Listen to this.

Concerning this group it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere. You know for many years CFC was like that. Now we have a little bit of respect and I think we are in great danger now.

But the days when we were despised and rejected like Jesus, we were safe. It is spoken against everywhere. The early Christian group, they called it a sect.

This is a cult. The real religion is the Jewish religion. This is a cult.

Everywhere they went they said this is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong. That's what they said about Jesus. That's what they said about Paul.

That's what they said about Martin Luther. They wanted to kill him. That's what they said about John Wesley.

The Anglican church would not allow him to preach in their churches. They said this guy is preaching heresy. Because his preaching convicted them of sin.

And that's what they said about all through the years of people who preached godliness. And today when we speak about the local church the same thing. When we say this is the way the apostles planted churches.

See for example in the world if you look around as I have traveled quite a few countries, I've seen basically two types of churches. One I call the pyramid structure. At the top there's a pope in the Roman Catholic system.

Cardinals and then bishops and priests all the way down. And the assemblies of God is exactly the same even though they claim to be Pentecostal. There's a worldwide general supernant at the top, the mayor in America and beneath that there are continent superants and area superants and country superants and all the way down to the local pastors.

It's a pyramid. Exactly like Coca-Cola company or Pepsi company always has a CEO on top and vice presidents and managers and directors or software companies, you all know that. That's not God's pattern

for a church.

And then there are these independent churches which are answerable to nobody. Just one guy starts a church and he's a law unto himself and very often they go astray or the pastor falls into adultery and then the church gets split and all types of problems. These are the two basic types of churches I've seen around the world.

But if you go to the Acts of the Apostles supposing you go to give the Bible to a non-Christian who was just born again who has no Christian tradition who has never seen any church or any such thing. Say a new non-Christian convert and you ask him read the Acts of the Apostles and just tell me and the Epistles and can you just work out a church pattern which you find in the New Testament. It will not be this pyramid it will not be these independent churches.

What is the pattern you see in the New Testament? You and I when you read it you already got a prejudiced mind and you won't be able to read it correctly. But you give it to a non-Christian convert whose mind is not being prejudiced or influenced by tradition and he will come to this conclusion. There were apostles and Paul is the greatest example of that.

He went around bringing people to Christ planting them in a local church and coming around a little later maybe two years later appointing elders then going somewhere else and like that different places. This was not a denomination. It was not Paul's denomination.

He refused to accept that. It was independent churches. They had fellowship with each other but they were not a denomination.

There was no central headquarters. There was no central place to which you send money like these other churches and Paul himself didn't take any money from these people. He just went around planting churches and he supported himself.

I mean this is what a non-Christian will see in the Acts of the Apostles. And then he will see that Paul would go and visit them again and again and write letters to them frequently warning them, correcting them. This is the New Testament pattern.

Tell me where you see it. I tried years and years and years to see I almost gave up. I said it's probably impossible.

I said Lord is that right? Something you started in the first century you mean it's impossible? Then what can we accept in the Bible? If this is impossible 101 other things are impossible. Either you accept the Bible as God's word or say this is all impractical stuff. And that's how many people have given up.

And then they say okay this may work in rich countries like America. I said Lord I want to prove in my lifetime, I don't know how long I'll live. I said this when I was 30.

I said I don't know how long I'll live but I want to prove in a poor country like India where there's no social security system where you have to pay for everything. You have to pay for medical treatment because the government hospitals you'll get sick there. You've got to go to hospitals.

And you can't send your children to cooperation schools. They don't learn anything. You have to pay for education in good schools.

Nothing is free. Education, medical treatment, everything you have to pay for. And it's a poor country.

When you go to the villages it is even more poor. And in this country will you let me see Lord that anyone who seeks the kingdom of God and his righteousness first will have all other things added to them. In the poorest village and that in the poorest village we can plant churches exactly like the New Testament.

I want to see it Lord in my lifetime. And like Simeon said when he saw the baby Jesus he said the body of Christ. Today I can say Lord I can depart in peace now because I've seen the body of Christ.

You've granted me my heart's desire. I've seen the poorest people freed from the love of money. I'll tell you a story.

One of our villages CFC church is extremely poor. Very, very, very poor. And the brother who leads it is also a very, very poor brother.

But he would never take money from anyone. And once when I gave him some money to give to the poor people in his church I knew he wouldn't take it himself. You know what he told me? He said brother we don't have any poor people in our church.

I said wow. I don't hear that in the cities. In the cities a lot of people think they are poor.

But this guy in a village says we don't have any poor people in the church. I tell you I wept. I wept because I said Lord Jesus what precious brothers you've given me to be my co-workers.

For a rich man to say I'm free from the love of money doesn't mean much. But when a really poor brother who's struggling to earn his living day to day and everybody else in the church is like that. Tells me we don't need any money.

We don't have any poor people in our church. I praise God for such brothers. And there's not just one.

There are many like that. This is what God has done. I'm not saying that everybody in CFC is free from the love of money.

I don't think they are. I think some love money quite a lot. That's up to them.

But remember this. It's a little rhyme that I sing to myself many times. Not what you gain but what you give measures the worth of the life you live.

I say that to myself many times. Not what you gain but what you give measures the worth of the life you live. So if you want to build Jerusalem we have to understand the difference between the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil it says was very very attractive. It was so beautiful. You read that in Genesis 3 and verse 6 the tree looked really good for food and delight to the eyes.

Think of just that one expression. The tree was a delight to the eyes and then God said don't eat from it. Now if God really wanted to keep Adam away from it he could have made that tree ugly.

Thorns and smelly and all that and if it was like that and God said okay don't go near there. Adam would say thank you I don't want to go there in any case. The thing is stinking and ugly.

Why did God make something so beautiful a delight to the eyes and say don't go there. To test man in one thing and that is the essence of all temptation. Will you choose what God has created or will you choose the creator.

All temptation is this. God says will you choose me the creator or will you choose this beautiful thing I created. And you know you're making that choice all the time.

I'll tell you some of the beautiful things God has created. Very pretty young women. Do you think you would be attracted to a very ugly woman stooped and bent over.

You're not. You're not tempted to lust at all. It's a very pretty woman there with fine features of the face and figure and I ask myself a delight to the eyes.

Same expression. A delight to the eyes. You got to admit it.

It is a delight to the eyes. But then you ask yourself who created that woman. God.

Why did he create that woman so attractive of form and face to test you in one thing. Just like he tested Adam. Do you want what I created or do you want me the creator.

My dear brothers that is the test you face almost every day. And you're making a choice just like Adam. Or even a woman can be attracted to a very handsome man.

You're not attracted to an ugly poor man. Even if he's godly. I'm sad to say that many girls are not attracted to godly people.

I'm very thankful that my wife was not attracted to my appearance. I'd lost my hair quite a bit. Even when I was young, 27, I'd lost my hair.

I had no income. I'd given up all my savings. My bank account was zero.

What do girls choose when they want to marry someone? Good looking. Good job. I didn't have either.

I was happy. I said nobody will choose me for money or for appearance now. It'll have to be for spirituality.

And I thank god that my wife and I got married on the basis of spirituality. That's why we're a happy couple today after 48 years. So I'm not saying that she knew that I was called by god.

It's not just you marry somebody without a job. I did have a job. I believe I had the most important job of all.

Better than anybody could have to serve the lord. But I didn't have a regular income. I had to trust god for my needs.

So it's a special case. I'm not saying that you should go and marry a man without a job or income. In fact, I encourage people to check out whether the man can take care of you.

I'm just saying that as an example in our case. But the point is this. Like silver and gold.

Who created silver, gold and all to be so valuable? God. Have you ever seen any woman wearing tin earrings and tin things around? No. Tin doesn't have a value.

Or wooden chains. I mean the sanyasis and all do that but not women. It's always gold.

Gold. Not even silver. Silver is not good enough.

Gold. Or at least what fool people to what looks like gold. So this gold is very attractive.

Who created it? God. Who created money? It's from gold and silver. And you see gold and God says I created it.

Do you value that or do you value me? Do you know there's gold in heaven? Yes. When you go to heaven you'll see gold. But it'll be under your feet.

The roads are made of gold in heaven. That means gold will be under your feet. Here we put gold on top of our head.

So those who have learned to put gold under their feet now are ready to go to heaven. Are you ready? Well you have a little more time. Jesus hasn't come.

Always the test is do you choose this beautiful thing I created or do you choose me? On the other hand is the tree of life. Adam could have gone straight to the tree of life. That's the life of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

He wasn't known as Jesus those days, the second person of the Trinity. The life of God through the Holy Spirit. But he didn't want that.

He wanted this which is attractive. Now today you cannot go to the tree of life like that. Because we read in Genesis chapter 3 that God drove out the man and in front of the tree of life, Genesis 3, 24 He put a flaming sword which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

There was no sword before Adam sinned. But now there is no sword today in front of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But there's a sword in front of the tree of life.

If you want to go, there's a sword going in all directions. You cannot come to the tree of life without that sword falling on your self-life and killing it. You say, who wants that? I want to please myself.

I want to enjoy a few things. Then come to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There, there's no sword.

You can sit there and discuss doctrines. All these people who discuss doctrines, you know where they are sitting? They're not sitting at the tree of life. They're sitting around the tree of knowledge of good and evil and arguing about this verse and that verse and the other verse and get into heated arguments.

All that happens around the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They sit there and discuss various doctrines and Christendom is full of denominations all sitting around the tree of knowledge of good and evil saying you're wrong and you're wrong and they go like that. They're all holding up a bible and saying this is Christendom.

The tree of life is a group of people who preach the daily cross. Death to self every day. Take up the cross and follow me.

They're not so much interested in doctrine. They appreciate doctrine. Doctrine is particularly about the person and the work of Christ.

That's very important. Jesus Christ is God. Very important.

If you don't believe that, you can't have fellowship with me. Jesus Christ became a man. If you don't believe that you can't have fellowship with me.

And Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead ascended to heaven and coming back. The person and the work of Christ, these are fundamental doctrines. Some of the other things, you can be a believer without being baptized in water.

Salvation Army people, William Booth and all were godly men but they didn't preach baptism. John Wesley preached infant baptism. You can be a godly man without you can be, in those doctrines you can have error.

Many people don't believe the church will go through the tribulation. Don't argue with them. You can be godly without believing that.

And you may have some of your doctrines wrong and still be a godly person. See, people think that we think there are no believers outside of our CFC. Completely wrong.

One of the people who I mean, if I were to mention two or three people whom I respect very highly in India, first was Sadhu Sundar Singh. Tremendously godly man. He didn't belong to CFC by the way.

He belonged to the Anglican Church which was a church in those days. And such a godly man, I've been tremendously challenged. He was not a teacher so I don't read his writings.

But I look at his life and I see, wow, that man really knew God. And I'll tell you another person whom I respect very highly, Mother Teresa. She's now a saint but Mother Teresa who's Roman Catholic.

People say, how can you respect her? She prayed to Mary. I'll tell you something, when you stand before Jesus, you'll be surprised to see her. And she'll be way ahead of you and me.

Because God is not going to check up your doctrines at the judgment seat of Christ. It's the life that matters. She had a life.

I've read her writings. I've got a list of about 30 writings of hers in my pocket, which I read now and then. I have never seen any Protestant man writing like that about Jesus.

And I say, wow, she really loved Jesus. She had a number of doctrines wrong. John Wesley had a number of doctrines wrong.

But we can't work together with them. If John Wesley were living today and practicing infant baptism, though he is a hundred times more godly than me, and he's living in Bangalore, I would say, Brother John Wesley, I'm sorry, we can't work together. I wish we could work together.

You're such a godly man. I wish you were the elder in our church. I would just submit to you, but we cannot, because you preach infant baptism.

But I would come and visit you every week to learn about God from you. But we can't work together. Because you want to baptize babies, and I don't believe in that.

So I disagree with the godly man. But I would fellowship with him. And if Mother Teresa was living in Bangalore, I would really seek fellowship with her.

But I wouldn't let her. I wouldn't work together with her. No.

We need to distinguish between that. We're not so exclusive that we think we are the only believers in India. Absolute rubbish.

Many people get upset with me. The people who say that we are exclusive, they go to the other extreme and say, oh, well then you appreciate Mother Teresa. Well, I don't go to her for doctrine.

I see something in her life. If something is wrong with your scooter, you go to an auto mechanic. If something is wrong with your heart, you go to a heart surgeon.

You don't take your scooter to the heart surgeon, and you don't get the auto mechanic to operate on your heart. Don't mix up the two. So I don't go to Mother Teresa to get doctrine.

She can't teach me doctrine. It's like going to the auto mechanic for heart surgery. I say, but the auto mechanic can fix my scooter.

And she can show me something about life. So, whenever I see a godly man, self-denying godly man who loves Jesus, and I wouldn't go near her if she didn't love Jesus. She really loves Jesus.

So what I mean is, the tree of life is not a place where we argue doctrine primarily. I find a lot of people who agree with me in doctrine, but I don't see them to be godly. Even in CFC.

They agree with all the doctrines I preach. I don't see a godliness, a devotion to Jesus Christ. So what is this tree of life? That's what we want to look at.

Turn with me to, it's explained by the way, in 2nd Corinthians in chapter 11. In 2nd Corinthians chapter 11, we read the tree of life. Paul says, I'm jealous for you with a godly jealousy.

2nd Corinthians 11.2 I betrothed you to one husband that is Christ. That I might present you to Christ as a pure virgin. That is a jealousy which is godly.

There is a jealousy which is evil. Like Cain had a jealousy of Abel. Evil.

But a godly jealousy is the type of jealousy God has. You know, like a husband is very protective of his wife. She must not be interested in any other man.

That's a jealousy. A jealous husband who does not want his wife to be interested in any man but himself. That's the right thing.

And this is the type of jealousy Paul had for these Corinthian Christians. This is a bride of Jesus Christ. And I want to preserve her for Christ.

I don't want all this worldliness and all to come in. I want to preserve or protect her. And so that I can present her as a pure virgin.

Not an adulterous harlot to Jesus as a bride. And that's the responsibility of an elder. Paul had a jealousy for that church.

And if you're an elder, you must have a jealousy. A godly jealousy for the people in your church. I can stand before God and say, I have that.

That's why I preach some strong things. Because I have a godly jealousy that the people who come here and listen to me must be presented one day as a pure virgin to Christ. Not people who fool around with sin.

I don't care how much they hate me or how much other people call me heretics. You know, I've discovered that people who call me heretics, somebody once said, Brother Zach is preaching all false doctrines. Some pastor.

Some brother said, what is the false doctrine? He said, I don't know but it's something. That's what they always say. We don't know what it is.

And someone said to him, there are 1000 messages of his on YouTube. There are 30 books he has written. Can you show me one sentence in any of those messages, any of those books, what's wrong? He said, no, I don't know but some people say that.

Don't believe all this rubbish. You know, when you accuse a person you must be specific. This is the doctrine and this is scripture.

This is wrong. They don't say that because there is nothing. So, here Paul says, I have a godly jealousy.

I want to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. And then he says, I am afraid. 2nd Corinthians 11 3. Like the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness.

Why did the serpent deceive Eve? Took her away from the tree of life. To the tree of knowledge, of doctrine. And Paul says, I'm afraid the same thing can happen to you.

That instead of going to life, you'll go to doctrine. You'll start arguing about doctrine and unite with people who got the same doctrine but don't have the same life. You see that? You unite with people just to have the same doctrine.

That's not a virgin. Turn you away. The serpent will lead you astray.

And what is the tree of life? Here's the definition of the tree of life. Simple, pure, devotion to Jesus Christ. That's the tree of life.

So, when you compare with scripture to scripture, you understand what the tree of life is. So, I'll tell you honestly. I want to fellowship with those who have a simple, pure, devotion to Jesus Christ.

And sometimes I find that in these village brothers in Tamil Nadu who can't speak English. That's why I learned Tamil. I never knew Tamil.

But I said, I want to fellowship with these brothers. And I'm going to learn. It doesn't matter if I make mistakes.

These brothers in Tamil Nadu bore with me for many years when I made a lot of mistakes in my Tamil. But they knew I loved them. I'll tell you, I learned Tamil mainly for the sake of these brothers in Tamil Nadu.

I wanted to communicate with them. And, you know, there are people here, sophisticated young people in Bangalore who never want to fellowship with these poor village brothers who come from Tamil Nadu. Yeah, I've seen some of them.

Look down on them. It is their loss. It's your loss.

My life has been greatly enriched because I don't stay here all the time. I visit the churches and the villages frequently. That's my salvation.

It brings me down to earth instead of this sophisticated, highly educated crowd here in Bangalore. I praise God for them, but sometimes I come down to earth and fellowship with ordinary people and I realize that life is the important thing, not doctrine and heavy explanation of various verses. Devotion to Jesus Christ.

And that's something you can't put in words. It's something you sense in a person. Here's a person who's devoted to Christ.

That man's around the tree of life. And it doesn't bother me if he doesn't agree with me on one or two things. I can fellowship with him.

As I said, I cannot work with some of them, like John Wesley, if he preaches infant baptism. But boy, I would fellowship with them to any extent. More than with some people who agree with me on baptism.

Because my fellowship is not around the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That would build Babylon. My fellowship is with those in the tree of life.

So people ask me, Brother Zak, do you have fellowship with all the brothers and sisters in your church in CFC Bangalore? I say no. I'm closer to some. And I'm not ashamed of it.

Why did Jesus take Peter, James and John? You read the Gospels. He'd go to the Mount of Transfiguration, he'd take Peter, James and John. He'd go to the house of Jairus' daughter, he'd drive out everybody and take Peter, James and John.

He'd go to Gethsemane, he'd take Peter, James and John. It wasn't a rotation. Okay, Peter, James and John, your turn today.

Tomorrow it'll be Andrew, Philip and somebody else. No. Doesn't it look like partiality? It's not partiality.

God is not partial. But he was drawn to those who had a greater hunger and devotion. And same with me.

I'm drawn to those who come around the tree of life. Simple, pure devotion to Christ. So I am closer and I spend more time.

I don't spend evenly time with all the believers in CFC. No. Not even with all the elders.

I'm drawn to those who have a simple, pure devotion to Jesus Christ. And I want to spend all, till Jesus comes, I want to be, spend my time with them. Not just to say, oh brother Zach, we agree with you.

We believe this is the truth and we are associated with CFC. Okay, go ahead. I have no objection to that, but if I don't see pure devotion to Jesus Christ in a person's life, a humility and a brokenness, I say, praise the Lord.

We are good brothers. If you have any problems, let me know. I'll help you out.

But fellowship, my fellowship is around the tree of life. Simple, pure devotion to Christ. That's what I seek to preserve myself in.

And if you are serious about your Christian life, all of you brothers, preserve yourself in a simple, pure devotion to Christ. And if your elder is not going that way, I say to you in Jesus' name, don't follow him. I'll tell you that.

You can sense when you meet a person, you live with a person, you meet him frequently, you listen to his message, you'll know whether he's got devotion to Christ or a lot of doctrines. Whether he's trying to impress you or whether he's trying to help you. Whether he wants fellowship with you or just to rule you.

Do you know who is the most valuable person in any church? It's not the one who can preach well. It's not the one who can do a great literature ministry. No.

I praise God for those who can preach well. I praise God for those who can do a literature ministry. But they are not the most valuable people in any church.

The most valuable person in a church is the one who can build fellowship. Between brothers and sisters. Between brothers and sisters, between sisters.

That is the most valuable person in fellowship which leads to fellowship with God. We have fellowship with the Father and fellowship with one another. A person who can do that, he may not be an elder, but he's the most valuable person in your church.

Sometimes we don't value the person. Who is the most valuable person in a church? Because we say, No, he can't preach well. But do you see a devotion to Christ in him? Do you see a sensitivity to the needs of someone else? Like you heard Brother Parashwatham say, as a stranger, he came to CFC once and somebody heard him coughing, coughing, coughing, went and bought a cough syrup and gave it to him.

To this total stranger. Boy! I was so delighted to hear that somebody in CFC did that. I don't know who it is and I don't want to know who it is because I don't want him to be deprived of his reward when Christ comes again.

Let him get his reward then. So I don't want to find out the name also. But I praise God for those who like we sang in that song, if I can live and make people love, I have not lived in vain.

I have not taught people doctrine. You know that I am very strict on doctrine. Because these things are important.

I have taught doctrine for years. But to me it's like the outward form of this devotion to Christ. We need it.

It's like wearing clothes. We don't come naked. We have clothes.

We have decent clothes. We want our sisters also to be dressed decently. When we are against fashions and all the worldly type of exposing of skin and all, it doesn't mean that sisters should not dress decently.

I believe that we must comb our hair properly. People ask me why I carry a comb in my pocket. I say because I have got so little hair.

People who have very little money are very careful with it. People who have plenty of money, they don't care. People who have plenty of hair, they don't care.

For so little, I must keep it combed properly. So, I believe in sisters also being decently dressed and their hair combed and all that. There is no value in just being let your hair fly around and not properly decently dressed.

There is nothing great about that. That's not spirituality. That's craziness.

So, we should have everything in balance. We must be decently dressed and properly dressed but our main thing in our life must be devotion to Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus Christ.

That's the tree of life. And what will that produce in our life? We read in Ephesians 5 and verse Ephesians 5 verse 25 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. That is the Jesus I follow.

Who loved the church and gave himself and I say Lord I want to follow you. I love the church and how will I prove it? I will give myself totally. I will never say I'm too tired, I'm sick I'm exhausted I can't go there.

Never. I love the church. I don't want to go everywhere I want to go but if the Lord tells me to go I tell you if I'm bedridden I'll get up and go.

I'll ask somebody to carry me on my bed over there. Because I love the church and I will give myself for it and I will not consider my health or my this or that or my money nothing. Christ was like that.

He loved the church and gave himself for it. You know like we saw in that video the other day of a man helping his brother run the triathlon and saying that my mother would have been unhappy and I think Jesus saying my father would be unhappy if I leave Zach around here. I got to hold him and run and say Lord make me like that to my fellow brothers and sisters.

I don't want to leave them lying here. I want them to finish the race and when I come to the end of the race I want to push them in front of me so that they get the prize. I don't mind going behind.

That's the spirit of Christ. That's what he did. See what he said in John chapter 14 to his disciples.

Ask yourself whether you have the spirit. John chapter 14 he said to his disciples in verse 12. Truly a truly.

He said I'm not joking. That's what he means. Sometimes you think oh it can't be like that.

He said I'm not joking. I mean this. The works that I have done you will do and you know what will happen? Greater works than I have done you will do.

That's the spirit of Christ. That's a true elder brother who longs that people in his church will do greater things than him. You're not fit to be an elder if you don't have that longing for people in your church.

They will accomplish more than you. They'll preach better sermons than you. They'll be more mightily used than you.

More anointed. They will heal more sick people and cast out more demons than you. You long that? You're really fit to be an elder brother.

You got the spirit of Christ. This is devotion to Christ. So much of Christian ministry today is so centered on what I'm doing and my ministry and me, me, me, me.

This is the spirit of Christ. He loved the church and gave himself for it. The spirit of sacrifice.

Jerusalem. If you went to Jerusalem the main thing there was the temple. And if you as soon as you entered the temple, you know what you see? Blood, blood, blood, blood because the altar is there.

Every day. Blood all over the place. The blood of bullocks and goats and splattered all over.

Because Jerusalem is the city of sacrifice. You know what Babylon is? Babylon is the place of business. And that Babylon came into the temple once when people were selling sheep and doves.

You know the reason for that? They were saying, you're coming from Galilee, you don't have to walk these 70 miles and bring all your sheep and all from there. We will give you the sheep here, but it costs a little more. We have to take a commission, you see.

And you can't put that Roman coin in the offering box, so we'll give you this Hebrew coin, but we'll take a commission like these money changers. And Jesus said, you come into the house of God and try to make a profit for yourself? Get out, all of you. Don't make this a place of merchandise.

You made my father's house a den of thieves. And that's exactly what's happening today. People make money in the name of Christianity, preaching, collecting money from them, preaching, collecting money from them, and saying, you must give, you must give, you must give.

And it lines the pocket of the preacher. And the guy lives in grand style. Some of them buy planes with that money of that poor fellow who's got a rotten old car.

And the preacher, this is so called foolish prosperity gospel. It's a deception. It's going on all over the world.

I remember hearing of an American journalist who heard of a church that's preaching prosperity, and he wanted to find out if it really works. He said, if it works, I might as well advertise it in the papers. So he said, I don't have to go into the church.

In America, everybody travels by a car, you know. So he said, I just go to the parking lot and see the type of cars that are here. I'll know whether these people are rich or not.

That's enough to find out if this prosperity gospel really works. So he went and saw all the cars of the congregation people were poor cars. But the pastors and assistant pastors and the church staff were very expensive cars.

And he said, yes, it works. But it only works for certain people who are the pastors and leaders, not for the others. This is the so called deception of the prosperity gospel.

It's the exact opposite in CFC churches. They don't take money from anyone. So sacrifice is what Jerusalem is known for.

And if your church is going to be a part of Jerusalem, if you're going to be a part of Jerusalem, there'll be the spirit of sacrifice in you. The spirit of sacrifice where you die yourself and thus seek to serve God. And if you don't get anything from it, you remember what you heard Brother Victor say about the Good Samaritan, how Jesus when the Good Samaritan was a picture of Christ told the innkeeper, okay, you spend some more, more than I give you, when I come back, I'll repay you.

And that's what Jesus says. Did you spend some of your own money because you served me? Don't worry. When I come back, I tell you, I will repay you.

You want that repayment from Christ when he comes? When Noah built the ark, the one thing God never told him and God, Noah never asked. The one thing today is, if God told today somebody some pastor, you've got to build an ark. First question will be, Lord, where's the money come from? Noah never asked that question.

Isn't it interesting? Supposing God asks you to build a ship. A ship. You know how big a ship is? You know how many millions of rupees it costs? What is the first question you'll ask him? Ship, Lord, who's going to pay for it? Where's the money coming from? Noah did not ask.

You know why? Because he knew what God would say. From your pocket, Noah. Sell some of your land.

Sell some of your land. Get rid of it. Then you'll have money, right? You've got such a lot of land I've given you.

Sell it. Build the ark. The Bible says, the last days will be like the days of Noah.

Wickedness. Evil. Sexual evil.

But also there will be people like Noah who will serve God at their own expense. Are there some like that here? I hope so. That's what we're building in CFC.

People like Noah who will not ask God, where's the money going to come from? Who's not going to go around taking a collection. Hey fellas, I want to build an ark. Do you know how much a ship costs? You've got no idea how much a ship costs.

Come on, give me some money. He trusted God that if God wanted him to build an ark God would give him the money. We've done that in 41 years.

In cities like Bangalore and the poorest villages in India. Never asked anybody for one rupee. Not even for this grand building that you see here.

We never asked anybody to give one cent. People gave. But we never asked them.

We never sent a report. We never advertised to people. Hey fellas, do you know we're building a hall to accommodate people? We wanted to serve others better.

That's why we made all these arrangements. But we don't ask people for it. If God is interested in it, he provides.

If God is not interested in it, we'd say, Lord, we don't want it. We're not at all interested in any project you're not interested in. I said that to God long ago.

I'm not interested in buying any land for the church which you're not interested in. I'm not interested in any project you're not interested in. We want to sacrifice.

You know, some of the great missionaries, I've read a lot of missionary biographies. You can't be a missionary unless God calls you. You can't be a full-time worker like me unless God calls you.

So we've never taught people, if God calls you, do it. But you can't go into something if God doesn't call you. You can't join the army if the army doesn't recruit you.

So how can you just decide to go and missionary work? I've seen a lot of people who come to India as missionaries without a call from God. I've seen numbers of them in the last 40 years. And I tell you, I don't have a respect for even one of them.

There are tourists who got so many complaints and grumblings against others who got more than them. I'll tell you the missionaries I respect. Those who came before 1950.

Those were godly people. Amy Carmichael, William Carey. Godly.

Read the biographies of these people. Adoniram Judson who went to Burma. Hudson Taylor who went to China.

C.T. Studd who went to Africa. They were all before 1950. There's another type of Christians.

They went and sacrificed. You know the island of Fiji? Fiji is a group of islands in the Pacific. Almost everybody there is a Christian.

But we know 170 years ago they were all cannibals. Cannibals means people who eat others. The place was full of that.

And there was a man in England called James Calvert. He and his wife 25 years old. He and his wife got a burden to go to Fiji to preach the gospel to these cannibals.

So he got into a ship. You know the sailing ships those days. And they reached Fiji and the captain didn't know what they came for.

And he asked them, hey, you're going into these cannibals? You'll die. You know what he said? We died before we got onto the ship. I'll never forget that.

He said, we died before we got onto your ship. They can't kill us now. These are the people who went out to serve God.

They came to the tree of life and the sword killed them. James Calvert got the sword, hit him and killed him before he got onto the ship. He was devoted to Jesus.

We're going to meet some of these people in heaven. You're going to meet him, by the way. What will you tell your story? How much money you made? Is that what you're going to tell him? What a grand house you had? What are you going to tell him? He'll tell you about how you went amongst the cannibals and how you struggled.

I'm not asking you to go amongst the cannibals. I'm asking you, do you have the spirit of sacrifice wherever you are? You may not be called to be a missionary. Then you should not go.

Living in Bangalore, for example. I'm living in comfort. I'm not living in Rajasthan or North India where it's much more difficult.

I'll go there if the Lord calls me. I'm not asking you to go anywhere. I'm saying, wherever you live, do you have the spirit of sacrifice? That is Jerusalem.

If you have the spirit of gain and commerce and whatever I can gain from the church, that's the spirit of Babylon. There are a lot of people who come to the church to get some benefit. What can I get from here for myself? That's the spirit of Babylon and you gather people like that in your church, it will be Babylon through and through.

You want to build Jerusalem, gather people who have the spirit of sacrifice, who will deny themselves, who have seen Jesus and are devoted to Him and want to go that way, the way He went. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. That is what will finally build Jerusalem, the city of sacrifice, the church of sacrifice.

I pray that many of us will be gripped by this. You know, C.D. Studd was a great missionary. He was actually a cricketer.

He was a world famous cricketer, playing in the England team in the early 1900s. He was from a very, very rich family. He could have become a famous cricketer.

You would have known his name as a cricketer. But he got converted. His father got converted first in a meeting of D.L. Moody.

He was a great evangelist. Then he got his sons also to listen. He got converted and he gave up his cricketing career immediately.

He decided to go to China but he was so sick with asthma. The medical people said, you can't be here, go away. So he came to India, to the Nilgiris.

He was there for some time. He was sick. He went back to England.

No missionary team would accept him as a missionary because he failed in the medical check-up. So you know what he did? He said, okay, I'm sick with asthma, whatever it is, but I want to serve God. No missionary team will accept him.

I will go myself. And he went into the heart of Africa and Congo, to a place where when he went, that place there were no believers. When he left, there were 10,000 believers.

And he went and he almost never went back. His wife had to be alone in England looking after the children because they could not live in that jungle. And he made this little hut and he used to call his hut Buckingham Palace, which is the place where the king and queen live.

He said, the king of heaven lives here. And he lived there, lived there and he died there. And I heard that his wife was equally devoted.

His wife came once to see him and walked and you know, spent some time with him and then as she was going back, she had to go back to England she knew that she would never see her husband again. And she turned around as she went to the vehicle she never looked back. She had given her husband up to the Lord for his work.

I read these stories and I say, Lord, I'm not called to go to Congo. I'm not called to go to China. But where I live, I can live by the spirit of sacrifice.

I can live without spending too much money on myself. I don't have to go to restaurants to eat food. We can eat simple food at home.

I can deny myself. I don't need to buy so many clothes. I've already got enough shirts and pants.

Why do I need another one? Your sisters can say, I've got enough saris. Why do I need to buy another one? Why do I have to fight with the husband that for my birthday you must give me a sari? What rubbish! Those are for people around the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Let them do what they like.

Around the tree of life we believe in self-denial, sacrifice, because we're going to build a church. Let people think we are crazy. It's okay.

We're not interested. One day Jesus will come. And there are some who will shine as stars forever.

Not for one or two years. Forever. I'm living for that day.

I'm not living for a reward. I feel that Jesus has done so much for me that if I spend my whole life serving him, sacrificially, it'll be nothing. It'll be a drop in the ocean compared to what he did for me.

About 23 years ago I was driving my little moped across the road here, this Wheeler Road, and I was crossing that level crossing and the man at the level crossing was a new person and they had to raise one at a time. So he raised the first bar and I went across and then he saw the cars coming and he lowered the second one before I crossed. I didn't see it.

I was going across and suddenly that bar he lowered it. It hit me on my chest. There's a big red scar across my and I fell down on the railway line.

Hit my head and there was a crack in my skull. 1993 August. And I don't know what happened.

I still don't remember because you know these things get out of your memory when you have accidents like that. I find myself afterwards standing and somebody had parked my moped there. And I wondered what happened.

And the policeman was standing there and the people were all waiting at the Somebody picked me up before the train came. Anyway, I was fit enough to get onto my scooter and go home before I went to the hospital to get an x-ray and all. And when I went home I said, Lord I have not finished saying thank you to you for dying for me.

Give me a few more years just to say thank you. I don't want any reward. Just to say thank you for dying for me on the cross and God's given me now 23 years after that.

I've met many precious brothers and sisters in these years. It's been such a joy. I don't know how much longer I live.

I pray God I live up to a hundred. This may be ambitious on my part but when I say, you know I always say you can pray anything you want. I'm like a little two year old sitting on my father's lap.

And you know a two year old can say, Dad I want an elephant. Not a toy elephant. A real elephant I want you to get me.

Or a real aeroplane. None of these toy planes. A two year old can ask for anything.

And I'm like a two year old. I say, God I want to live up to a hundred. You can ask God for anything.

If your last sentence in your prayer is, but not as I will but as thou wilt. I also pray, Lord if you let me live up to a hundred, my wife must live up to 97 because she's three years younger than me. We want to go together.

I don't want either of us to be left behind here. Because we are co-workers. We help in lifting the suitcases when we travel and so many things we have to do together.

My point is this. You can ask the Lord for anything. Provided you say, not my will but thine.

But dear brothers and sisters think of, meditate. I meditate so many times on what Jesus did for me. My devotion is to Christ.

It's not to a doctrine. It's not to CFC. It is to Jesus Christ.

He's my beloved. Song of Solomon is a very precious song for me. It's a book for me.

I read it. It's the first book I studied in the Bible. Devotion to Jesus Christ.

I want to encourage all of you to come into that tree of life. I'm afraid. I'm afraid that the serpent will lead you astray from there to some pretty woman, to some pretty man, to some gold.

Something which will give you honor. Something attractive in this world. And you'll spend eternity eternity regretting why in the world did I not listen to brother Zack that day in the meeting.

I hope that won't be your fate. We're going to sing a song. It's a very beautiful song.

One of my many favorites. It's called You know the Lord said to his disciples, as the Father sent me, so send I you. Those are the words of Jesus to his disciples.

So send I you. Just like the Father sent me to come to this earth and live a life of sacrifice, self-denial from the time I was a child to the time I died on the cross. He told his disciples, I'm sending you in exactly the same way.

How many of you will hear his call? So send I you. Not to be a missionary. No, no, no.

To do the will of God. Whatever it is. If God calls you to be an engineer and you go as a missionary, you're living in disobedience.

Sometimes we think more sacrifice means more obedience. No, no, no. 1 Samuel 15 22 To obey is better than sacrifice.

Sacrifice is good. But it must be in submission to obedience to God's will. So I'm not giving a missionary call here asking you to go to cannibals or to North India.

I'm saying where you live, live a spirit of sacrifice. And say, Lord, I want to build Jerusalem, not Babylon. Can you go ahead and sing?

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/uoAZaQSO9vU.mp4>

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