

(Christian Leadership) the Way of the Cross

by Zac Poonen

The way of the cross is the way of power, and it means surrendering ourselves to death and burial, which is necessary for living a victorious life over sin.

Duration: 1:24:41

Scripture: Luke 3:21, 1 Corinthians 7:12-40

Topics: "Christian Leadership", "Sacrificial Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding and applying the verse from 1 John 4:17, which states that as Jesus is, so are we in this world. He highlights that this truth is unique to believers in the new covenant and sets them apart from figures like Elijah and John the Baptist. The preacher also discusses the principle of sacrifice in serving God, using the example of Jesus observing how people gave in the temple treasury. He emphasizes that Jesus is not concerned with the quantity of our actions, but rather the sacrificial heart behind them. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace this way of sacrificial living and to be aware of the watchful eye of Jesus in our lives.

Transcript

I want to read from Luke's Gospel, Chapter 3. Luke's Gospel, Chapter 3, Verse 21. We have spoken in more than one session, I have anyway, about the power of the Holy Spirit. And I have for a long time felt that the great need in Christendom is to approach this whole matter with an understanding of it based on scripture and that we should present it in such a way that prejudices are broken down and that people don't miss what God has for them before they leave this earth.

We don't need the baptism of the Holy Spirit to go to heaven. We need only the blood of Christ for that. The blood of Christ prepares us for heaven.

The baptism of the Spirit is to fit us for this earth. For the years we spend here before we go to heaven. And in Luke Chapter 3, we read in Verse 21, it came about when all the people were baptized that Jesus also was baptized.

And while he was praying, heaven was opened. Have you ever thought when you read that verse, what was Jesus praying about? It's not mentioned, but I think I know because of one reason. Whatever Jesus prayed for was answered immediately.

There was never a delay from heaven when Jesus prayed, except when he was hanging on the cross for our sin. And that was different because there he was an atoning sacrifice. But otherwise, every time Jesus prayed, his prayer was answered immediately.

And that's why I know what he was praying for. He was made in all things like his brothers, so that he could be our high priest, our forerunner, our leader. Christendom, a large part of Christendom, has been so taken up with the fact that Jesus Christ is God, which is true.

He was always God from eternity past when he was on earth, and for all eternity he will be. That they have not considered sufficiently the humanity of Jesus Christ. Theoretically, they acknowledge, yes, he became a man, but it's the fact that he came in our flesh, which is an important confession.

John makes much of that in his first letter. Why is that so important? Because he's God, we worship him. Because he became like us, we can follow him.

And because he became like us, he had to pray. There was no need for him to pray. There is no greater challenge to prayer.

No verse in scripture can challenge you to prayer as much as this one fact, that Jesus prayed. It says in Hebrews 5, 7, he prayed with loud crying and tears at times, and he was heard because of his godly fear. We know what he prayed for because it was immediately answered in verse 22, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.

That's what he was praying for. He taught us to pray for the same thing. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? We never ask, we never receive.

You have not because you ask not. You ask and receive not because you ask with wrong motives. But he prayed.

Even he had to pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon him. He wasn't any holier in his 31st year than he was in his 25th year. But something happened from that day.

His ministry began. And he did things in his ministry he had never done for 30 years. And as a preparation for that ministry, even the Son of God, when he came on earth, needed the Spirit of God to come upon him.

You know, logic asks so many questions here. Didn't he always have the Holy Spirit? Wasn't he born of the Spirit? If John the Baptist could be filled with the Spirit from the mother's womb, how much more Jesus? Yeah, there are so many questions here. I don't attempt to answer them.

Through the years as I've tried to work out a theology of the Holy Spirit, I find I'm always confused. I don't know. It's like the wind.

We can get the benefit of it, but to produce a doctrine of it, I don't even attempt it. I want to live in the good of everything that the Bible promises me in the Christian life, even if I can't explain it. Explanation is not necessary.

My digestive system works even though I don't understand how it works. I don't need to understand. I mean, if you're a doctor, it's good to understand it.

But I know doctors who can explain it, whose digestive system doesn't work. So it's not the explanation that's important. The important thing is that it should work.

I'm not particularly keen on getting a clear, pigeon-holed explanation step-by-step about the Holy Spirit. I don't want to go outside the boundaries of Scripture. That would be dangerous.

I don't want to experience anything in my life that Jesus never had or the apostles never had. I don't want to, you know, when I see so many things going on in the world today, claiming to be the ministry of the Holy Spirit, of people falling down and making noises and all types of things, and people have asked me how to know. I said, here is a four-fold test, which I have recommended to all the people in our churches.

At least one of these it must pass. One, did Jesus have it in his life? Did Jesus teach it? Number two. Did the apostles experience it? Did the apostles teach it? Very simple.

If it fails on all four counts, I say, I don't want it. I don't care what it is. It may or may not be.

I know the Spirit gives different experiences to different people, but it's a dangerous ground for me. I want to limit myself to these four, what Jesus experienced and taught, or what the apostles experienced and taught. That's it.

But I point out this passage because many, many years ago, when I was seeking God for the power of his Holy Spirit, and I was disappointed with what I saw in churches that preached the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and I never felt free to join those churches. The Lord directed me, and I was studying his word and seeking God in prayer in my room, many years ago, to this passage, and pointed out to me when Jesus received the Spirit coming upon him. It was when he was baptized in water in Jordan, and that baptism symbolized a surrender.

Jesus was surrendering himself to death and burial. You know, baptism, we are told in Romans 6, symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection. And John the Baptist said, I can't baptize you, and Jesus said, no, you have to do it.

It must be so, for only thus can we fulfill all righteousness. And there, Jesus gave himself into the hands of someone to be immersed, symbolically surrendering himself to death and burial. And what the Lord said to me that day was, the way of the cross is the way of power.

That's when the Spirit came upon Jesus. And what the Lord said to me at that time was, as long as you walk this way, you will have my power resting upon your life and your ministry. But if ever a day comes in your life when you think you've gone beyond this, or learned this thoroughly, that day my power will depart from you.

God spoke that to my heart 36 years ago, and I haven't forgotten it. It opened my eyes that day to understand not just the cross on which Jesus died, but the cross on which I died with him. That's another doctrine I have tried for years to understand and explain.

I can't explain it. I just believe it. I never saw Jesus dying for me on the cross, but I believe it.

Why do I know, how do I know that when he died, he took the punishment for all my sins? There is only one way in which I know that. Even if there were history records, historical records that pointed out that somebody called Jesus was crucified on outside Jerusalem. Okay, but it still wouldn't, the historical

records wouldn't tell me why he was crucified.

There is only one way that I know that it was for my sins that he died, and that he took the punishment for all my sins, and that's because the Bible tells me. I don't know any other way. How do I know Jesus rose from the dead? I have never seen him.

It's because I believe God's word. And it's when I believe God's word, that he took the punishment for my sins, and that his blood was shed for my sins, when I believed it, I had peace. My sins were forgiven.

Now the same scripture says, your old man was crucified with Christ, in Romans 6. Paul says in Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. I believe it on the basis of the same book, the Bible that tells me, he took my sins. Maybe I can't explain how he took my sins, but he took it.

Think of this verse, for example. I find it very difficult to explain, 2 Corinthians 5.21, God made him, or is it 5.20, God made him who knew no sin, to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. What does it mean, Jesus taking my sin, I can understand.

Ok, he took the punishment for my sin, I can understand that. But what does it mean when it says, Jesus who knew no sin, became sin, on Calvary's cross. I can't understand that.

But I say, Lord, I don't know, but it just shows me your tremendous love, that you became that for me, that I might become the righteousness of God in you. I don't want to explain it, or analyze it, or any such thing. And so in the same way, when God's word says that I, in some mysterious, wonderful way, even though I was born only in this century, I was crucified with Christ 2000 years ago, I believe it.

My sins were committed in this century, but they were taken 2000 years ago, so I suppose it's possible, even if I live in this century, for me to be crucified with Christ 2000 years ago. And I want to accept that. Now, when I accept that, I am saying, Lord, I agree with you, that this old nature of mine that I have received from Adam, cannot be repaired, cannot be improved, cannot be modified or changed in any way, it has to be condemned.

It has to be crucified, it's fit for hanging. Crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals of that time. Other criminals were given lesser sentences, but crucifixion was for the worst.

And I am agreeing with God there, that this nature I have inherited from Adam is fit for the worst punishment possible. It's fit only for death. What I need is a totally new nature, not an improved one.

There is a song, one chorus, in which one line goes like this, O thou spirit divine, all my nature refined. It's not true, it's not possible. I never sing it that way.

I always sing that song, O thou spirit divine, make all thy nature mine. My nature cannot be refined. It has to be crucified.

And when to choose the way of the cross just means, I agree one hundred percent with God's opinion of my nature, with God's condemnation and judgment when He condemns sin in the flesh on Calvary's cross, I say, Lord, I agree with it one hundred percent. When He put my old man to death on the cross, I say, Lord, I agree with it one hundred percent. And how do I show my agreement? With words? That's easy.

It doesn't mean a thing. The only way in which I can prove to God and to man that I agree with God's judgment of my nature on the cross is by taking up the cross every day. In other words, by reckoning

myself to be dead.

That's what it says in Romans chapter six. I began with Luke chapter three because I wanted to see the connection that I believe the biggest mistake, it's my personal conviction, I'm not here to judge anybody, I'm not here to condemn anyone. My personal opinion is that the biggest mistake that the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement have made is in not pointing their people to the way of the cross.

That would have been a mighty movement if they had pointed people to the way of the cross. You see the connection? Jesus chose the way of the cross and the Spirit came upon Him. These two are inseparably linked.

The Spirit led Jesus to Calvary and the Spirit will lead you and me to the cross. Always. There is a very close connection between these.

It's when the rock is smitten in the Old Testament that the rivers began to flow. You know, I used to think of, when I was younger, I used to think of Moses smiting the rock and a little trickle flowing out. But it wasn't a trickle.

Do you know how many people were there? Six hundred thousand men plus their wives and children. It must have been two million people. Can you imagine a city of two million people? How many square miles would that take? Ten, twenty square miles? Sorry, a hundred square miles perhaps? And no trickle would satisfy the water needs of two million people living in a hundred square miles.

But it was literally rivers flowing out of that rock. That is the way for the rivers of living water to flow. The rock has to be smitten.

Something inside has to die. That's my self. We don't realize how strong our self is, how important we make ourselves to be.

And that's what hinders the rivers of living water from flowing. We make other people feel small by our bigness. Something about Jesus, my dear brothers and sisters, which we really have to learn.

Jesus said, learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart. Have you just taken that as a verse? Or do you sit at Jesus' feet and say, Lord, teach me what it is to be gentle. Teach me what it is to be humble in heart.

And here is just one aspect of it. That when Jesus never made other people feel small. He didn't over-awe them with his gifts and his abilities and make them feel inferior.

And if I follow Jesus, I will never make any brother, even someone converted today, feel inferior to me. He is equal to me. I am clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

That's the only way I am accepted before God. And he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. That's the only way he is accepted before God.

I can't stand before God and say, well, Lord, I have served you for so many years so faithfully. On the basis of that, I deserve hell. What shall I say, even if I have lived faithfully for God for 60, 70 years? And at the end of it, when I stand before God, what shall I say? I am damned, but Jesus died for me.

That's all. Do I recognize that in my relationship with other brothers and sisters? If self is slain, nobody will feel inferior to me in my dealings with them. I will never make them feel small because they have failed or because they have fallen in areas where I have not perhaps fallen.

Or because they haven't managed to do it so well as I have managed perhaps. There is so much of this in Christendom. Christendom is full of leaders who make other people feel inferior and small.

You are a great man of God or woman of God if you can make other people feel equal to you. For that, the cross has to do a deep work within us of slaying all this sense of self-importance, all this sense of how much I have accomplished for God and everything. My old man is fit only for crucifixion, not for display.

And that's why when we present Christ to other people by our life or by our words, it's so important to draw the attention of people away from ourselves to Jesus. I must say that one of the most difficult things is to hold up the light of the world in such a way that the hand that holds it is not seen. To blow the trumpet of God in such a way that the person blowing the trumpet is not seen.

That should be our goal. We must be so much in love with the cross that we really seek and open ourselves to every opportunity where God allows us to be crucified by other men. And that's why God allowed Jesus to bear the cross all through his life.

I mean the physical cross he bore on Calvary, but there was another cross inwardly. He said, if anyone come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. Is it possible that the author and finisher of our faith, our forerunner, took up the cross only one day of his life and tells us to take it up every day for forty years? That's impossible.

He took it up himself every day. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see that. When he was tempted, he died so that he would respond in love.

It says in Romans chapter six, knowing this, verse six, that our old man was crucified with him and the purpose is, as it goes on to say, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. This is the secret of victory over sin, to accept the cross in our life. And therefore it says, therefore, even so, consider yourself, verse eleven, to be dead to sin.

Reckon yourself to be dead to sin. In all situations, I am called to reckon myself to be dead. I am crucified with Christ.

It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. What does that mean in practical terms? If somebody insults me, speaks evil about me behind my back or spits on my face or does anything, what does it mean to reckon myself dead? Think of a dead man here. We've come for his funeral and somebody says, you're a good-for-nothing fellow.

I always knew you were a rotten chap. No change of expression on his face. Not at all.

You kick him. No response. Or the other way around.

You praise him. Boy, you are a prophet. No change of expression still.

He doesn't make a difference whether you call him a prophet or a devil. He is dead. Now, a lot of people who hear or have read about these things, they are not really choosing to die.

They are playing dead. You know, children sometimes play dead. Somebody tickles them or kicks them hard enough and they say, hey, what are you doing? It's like that.

Most Christians are just playing games in this area. But I want to say to you that if you are really serious and you ask the Holy Spirit to really help you in this area, it can become a reality and your life will be entirely different thereafter. You know what Paul speaks about the power of his resurrection, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

There's a resurrected life that we can live even now on earth. A resurrected body I will get only when Jesus comes. That I have to wait for.

But resurrection life can gradually penetrate into different areas of my life where the life of Adam ruled once. That's the message of the gospel. But the point is, there cannot be a resurrection without a death.

It's only those who choose to die who will have a resurrection. You choose to die in an area, then you will have a resurrected life. You choose to be crucified with Christ and then it will be no longer you, but Christ that lives in you.

But you have to choose that way. The way of the cross in all situations. Death to self.

Reckon yourself dead. I want to point out this passage in Revelation, the book of Revelation. In chapter 4, there's a little expression we read here where John says, after these things I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven.

The first voice which I'd heard like the sound of a trumpet said to me, come up here. Come up higher. It's a beautiful word.

Come up higher. We know that Christendom was in a pretty bad shape by the end of the first century. All the other apostles had died.

John was the only one alive. And he looked around and he saw elders who had a name that they were alive, but they were dead, like the elder in Sardis. In another church, the elder was tolerating a Jezebel to run the show in the church in Thyatira.

In another church, they were so rich and they had so much that they didn't realize that in God's eyes they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. All the way down from the elder, down to the other one, down to the last one. And in another church, they were very careful to obey the rules.

They had rules and regulations and they kept all the pigs under control. But they had lost their first love. There was no love in their heart.

Beginning with the elder, down to the last person. John saw all this and he was grieved. Lord, what is going to happen to your church? He had a burden.

And the Lord said to him, come up higher. When we see things like that, it's good for us to be lifted up to heaven's viewpoint. Where the Lord says, look at these things from my viewpoint.

Like I said the other day, let the things that burden God's heart burden our heart. And let the things that don't bother God not bother us anymore. There has to be an elimination of a lot of things from our lives that don't bother God, that should stop bothering us altogether.

And the things that bother God should bother us. See, I can either carry my burdens or God's burdens. I can't carry both.

If I come to God with a lot of burdens of my own, I can't carry His. But if I learn to cast my burdens on the Lord, I can take His burdens. And that's the only way to serve Him.

Where I eliminate from my life those petty, trivial things that happen every day of our lives, which have no eternal value, which have no eternal significance, which don't disturb God one bit, but which can disturb us so much. A little loss of money here. The excitement that comes through gaining a little money there.

Or somebody insulted you or you heard somebody spread a false story about you or your family. These things don't bother God, shouldn't bother us. The Lord says, come up higher.

And the only way to come up higher is by dying to this life here. It's a wonderful way. We read in Revelation chapter one how before the Lord showed John the condition of those churches, He first gave him a revelation of Himself.

And John fell at His feet as a dead person and he saw Jesus. And then the Lord said, now I'll show you the condition of these churches. We always need to have that vision of Jesus.

Otherwise, we can be so hard on backslidden people and we don't help them. We always need to keep before us this vision of Jesus that John had. And then we can see the condition of the churches so we can help them.

The Lord says to us, come up higher. When Jesus came to earth and died on the cross, it was not just the fact that He died for our sins. You know in one place Jesus said, my father worketh hitherto and I work.

Ever since man sinned. We read in Genesis chapter one that on the seventh day God rested. And then man sinned.

And ever since that time God has not rested. He's been working. Jesus said that, my father worketh hitherto and I work.

And when Jesus came to earth, He revealed a principle that we see in the heart of God. That in a sin-cursed earth, there is only one way that God can serve man. And that is by the principle of sacrifice.

That was what was manifested on Calvary. And if we are to adequately represent God in the sinful world, that principle of sacrifice must grip us. And anyone who has not been gripped by that, he can preach a hundred and one things.

He will not represent God adequately. It has many many applications. If there is no sacrifice in your life, you cannot serve God.

Because Jesus manifested that as a basic principle. That's the only way God could serve man. And that's the only way we can serve our fellow men.

Now when we look around and see Christian preachers becoming rich through preaching the gospel, you understand why they are not, they haven't understood the first thing about God. They haven't understood the first thing about the way Jesus went. When we see Christians seeking a life of ease on this earth where Jesus suffered and served, we can say they haven't understood.

A. V. Simpson wrote a poem where he said, there's no time for me in this life to look for ease and comfort, for this is not the path my blessed master trod, but strenuous toil. Each hour and power employed, always and all for God. Always and all for God.

And all the great men of God who have walked with God and who have understood God's ways have understood that if I am to serve the Lord, if I am to be effective for God, this principle of sacrifice must characterize every area of my life. The principle of self-denial for the sake, for Jesus' sake. Not, you know, there are heathen religions that practice self-denial for one's own development of one's own personality.

I'm not talking about that. I'm not talking about fasting as a means of becoming slimmer. I'm not talking about that at all.

I'm talking about this principle that Jesus manifested, that it's only by sacrifice that we can serve. That's why we read in Mark's Gospel, Chapter 12, when it says here, he sat down opposite the treasury in Mark 12, 41, and he began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury. Read that carefully.

Very carefully. He sat opposite the treasury, and he was watching. And he watches even today.

Not how much people were putting in, but it says he was watching how they were putting in. He wasn't bothered how much it was, but he was watching how. And even today as he watches, he doesn't watch how much we do.

He watches how we do. Is there the element of sacrifice there? And then he saw the rich people putting in large sums, and a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, See, this poor widow, she's put in more than all the others because they put in out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty.

She put in all she owned. Jesus appreciated that. It's not how much we do.

He was never interested in statistics. Apply this not only to giving money, but to Christian work. We can say we're doing this, this, that, and the other for him, but Jesus doesn't watch that.

How do we do it? How much sacrifice is involved in it? We can give much, but there may be no sacrifice in it. We may do a lot of things, but there's no sacrifice in it. Then we have not understood the way of the cross.

And then we shall not have that power resting upon us that rested upon Jesus. The Spirit came upon Jesus to lead him along the way of the cross all through his life. When I was a very young Christian, I think I was about 22 or 23 years old, the Lord spoke to my heart very clearly from a verse in 2 Samuel chapter 24.

And that's been a guideline for me through all these years. And I think keeping it before me has protected me from many, many pitfalls and snares. I've seen a lot of young people, zealous, devoted.

You see them twenty years later, either they're backslidden or they've become big people, very important people. They are no longer the humble, broken servants of God they were when they started. God has blessed their ministry.

So many wonderful things God's gifted them, and it's gone to their heads. They've become big. It's because they haven't understood the way of the cross.

Christendom is full of such people. In 2 Samuel 24, we read of a time when David went to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. And he came to the threshing floor of one of his subjects, Araunah.

And he wanted to offer a sacrifice there because God told him to offer a sacrifice there. And Araunah said, you can take whatever you want, King, 2 Samuel 24, 22. Take the oxen for the burnt offering.

Take the yokes of the oxen for wood. You can have it all free. And everything, King, Araunah gives to the king.

But the king said, no, I'll pay for it. Because if I take it free from you, and I give it to God, it would not have cost me anything. And he said, I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing.

And that's the word the Lord spoke to my heart. Never in your life offer to me that which costs you nothing. And I said, Lord, help me.

If I serve you, it must cost me something. Other people need never know about it. It's enough if you know about it, but it must cost me something.

Are you willing to offer a sacrifice like that? Not just once, but consistently. I want to urge you, my brothers and sisters, let there be secret sacrifices in your life that no one knows about. Secret areas where you have sacrificed, where you have died.

And you never talk about it. Nobody ever knows. Deep trials and testings that you have gone through, which you never share with anyone.

One of the greatest challenges in my life has been the fact that Jesus never spoke about what all he suffered in thirty years. I'm sure he suffered a lot. I've tried to imagine a home, a poor home, with no private bedroom to retreat into when the temperature gets hot in the rest of the house.

There's a poor home where Jesus lived with four younger brothers and two younger sisters, and those brothers didn't believe in him, John chapter 7 says. I can imagine. Can you imagine living in a home with four unconverted younger brothers? How they would taunt you and tease you, and particularly when you're good and upright and holy, they'd taunt you even more.

He never said. I can imagine him walking down as a little boy down the streets of Nazareth, and old men sitting there and telling one another, you see that boy, the one on the other side? That's Mary's son. We don't know who the father is.

She was pregnant before she got married. He lived with that stigma all those growing years. Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit does come, he will take of the things of mine and show it to you.

But he never spoke about it himself. He never spoke about his sufferings or what all went on. If we ask the Holy Spirit to show us the glory of Jesus, he will show us these things.

These are the things that have challenged me in my life as the Spirit has taken the things of Jesus and shown them to me and challenged me to go that way in daily life. I want to ask you, ask the Holy Spirit to show you the way Jesus went. This is the whole secret of the Christian life, looking unto Jesus, how he

voluntarily chose the way of the cross.

You read one sentence like, he submitted to Joseph and Mary. It's just finished in one sentence. That's all.

But think of all that is involved in that one sentence. I've heard people say to me, I can't submit to that brother. He's not spiritual.

Jesus could have said that about Joseph and Mary. It didn't matter one bit whether Joseph and Mary were spiritual. God told him to submit and he submitted.

As a little boy, he was like us. He was tempted like us. At every stage of life, you can see the footsteps of Jesus.

One of my sons was sharing a word in our local church a couple of months ago when he was home and he said something that stuck in my heart. I've never heard it like that before. He said that the Lord had shown him that at every stage in life, he could see the footsteps of Jesus.

You know, ten-year-old footsteps, twelve-year-old footsteps. Jesus' footsteps were not so big that a little boy couldn't put his foot in them. He was also a little boy.

Small footsteps and as he grew bigger, bigger footsteps. Always the way of the cross. What all did he suffer when he had to obey Joseph and Mary? Do you think Joseph and Mary made mistakes? As a new covenant father, I think of all the mistakes I've made.

I can imagine how much more it must have been for old covenant parents who didn't have the Holy Spirit, didn't have the Bible, didn't have tapes or conferences or anything. They must have made so many mistakes. And he suffered under them.

And he never sinned. He never despised authority. What an example.

He never spoke about it. But the Spirit of God has come to show us the glory of Jesus. I pray that there will be in all of our lives secret areas where we've had to be broken because God was dealing with us.

I say to young people, I've said this in all of our churches, if God has not succeeded, I mean if God calls you in your teenage years and he's not succeeded in doing a thorough work of breaking in you by the time you're thirty, well I don't know whether God will be able to give you authority and fulfill his ministry through you. When God calls a man or a woman in their teenage years, the primary thing he seeks to do in their life, in the years before he commits a ministry to them when they're thirty or thirty-five, is breaking. Breaking the strength of their self.

And one of the ways in which he breaks us is by putting us under authority. And as we submit to that authority, we are broken and broken. And you resist it, but God cannot commit authority.

I've seen it again and again and again. I know there are people who abuse authority. I know Christendom is full of people who are abusing their authority, etc.

That's got nothing to do with you. God is sovereign. I remember the years when I was a young person.

Now, you see, I've sometimes violated this principle that Jesus never said anything about his past life. And I sometimes said it and I said, Lord, should I say it or not? But I haven't made it a rule, but I say it

sometimes just to encourage other people. And I remember when I was in an assembly as a young man, and God had given me a gift of ministry, as I said, when I was about twenty-two, twenty-three.

And here were elders in that church who were double my age, and they saw the gift I had and how people responded to what I was saying. And they were jealous. And they wouldn't let me speak.

They asked me to sit quietly there. And the Lord said, sit quietly. Keep your mouth shut.

I sat there. Not one or two days, years. I've had experiences subsequently where in churches where I've had, in our own church where I was going as a young man in my twenties, where I've taken special meetings.

The elder finally said, sit down there. And he made me sit at the back. And I sat there.

And the Lord said, keep your mouth shut. Humble yourself. Submit to authority.

Keep a good relationship with that elder. Don't ever let any bitterness or rebellion come in your heart. And I said, yes, Lord, and I'll do it.

And those were the years God really broke me, crushed me, and showed me that I was nothing. And as I took that place, in the future, as time went on, one day God committed authority to me. Authority in my ministry.

Authority over demons. Authority over brothers. You know, not to lord it over them.

This is the word the Lord's given me about authority. John chapter seventeen. And I'm very, very careful.

I keep this in mind before me. Always. Because God's given me authority over many people now, and I live in fear because of that.

It says about Jesus, Jesus said in his high priestly prayer, Father, the hour has come, glorify thy son. And then he says in verse two, even as thou gavest him authority over all men, that to whom thou hast given him, he may give eternal life. And what the Lord showed me was this.

I give you authority only for one purpose. To lead people to eternal life. That is the purpose of authority.

To lead them to be connected with God. To lead them to be connected with Christ as their head, so that I can pull out and disappear. To lead them to partake of God's own nature.

To lead them to godliness. And the Lord has said to me, if that is your goal, I will give you my authority when you speak. I will give you my authority when you are an elder in a church.

When you are an elder for other elders, my authority will back you up in what you say and do. If your goal is nothing but to lead them to eternal life. Jesus, he says he got authority from the Father to lead people to eternal life.

Not to lord it over people like some big king who's got people to serve him. No, he wasn't like that. He was a servant.

He was only interested in leading people to eternal life. Where are we brothers and sisters? Who are we to think that we're somebody? Yup, there must be areas in our life in secret where God has succeeded in

breaking us. And we offer to the Lord that which has cost us something.

It was when that alabaster vial was broken, that the odor of the ointment filled the house. And until it was broken, it was all there. But it was inside.

A lot of us, Christ lives in us. But that sweet perfume does not go forth, because we are not broken. God arranges circumstances in your life to break you.

In your home, in your place of work, with a difficult boss. It's to break you. In the church, maybe with an elder who is lording it over you.

Fine. Allow yourself to be broken. It's easy to run away.

I've seen the people who've run away. And I see what comes of their life. Nothing.

And I've seen what comes of the lives of those who humble themselves and fall into the ground and die. Much fruit. There is only one guaranteed way of producing much fruit in our life.

And that's the way of falling into the ground and dying. You know, this matter of being filled with the Spirit, this is the way the Lord has shown it to me. You can be filled with the Spirit the day you're born again.

But your capacity is only that of a little cup. How much can a cup, even if it's full, how much can it contain? But if from that day I faithfully take up the cross and deny myself and take up the cross and die to myself every day, gradually this cup will become a bucket. And then when I'm filled, it means something more.

And I continue faithfully along the way of the cross, year after year this bucket becomes a big tub. And again can be filled. And then it becomes a tank.

And then it becomes a river. And then it becomes many rivers. So the newborn convert is filled with the Spirit.

The apostle Paul at the end of his life is filled with the Spirit. There's a lot of difference. There's the full cup and the full river.

Yeah, both are filled. People talk about spiritual people. But what's your capacity? You can remain a cup and say, I'm spirit filled till the end of my life.

That is not God's will. He wants you to grow. And the only way for our capacity to grow is if you choose the way of the cross.

If you say, Lord, I will never in my life offer to you that which cost me nothing. In the midst of an apostate Christendom, where people have not understood this principle at all, God calls people here and there to manifest it in their life, the principle of sacrifice, the principle of dying to self, of being crushed. I want you to turn to Isaiah chapter 53.

Isaiah 53, we know that this is a chapter that refers to Jesus. And for years I read it like that and it's true. But God opened my eyes to see that there were parts of this chapter that were meant for me too.

There are certain aspects of the cross, like His bearing the sins of the world, in which I have no part. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, verse 5. He was pierced for our transgressions, smitten of God and afflicted.

I have no part in that. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. But there are certain other parts of this chapter which explain very clearly to me what the way of the cross is.

For example, beginning with verse 2. He grew up before His Father. He didn't grow up before man. Brothers, sisters, grow up before God.

He grew up before Him, like a tender shoot, like a root out of a poached drum. And He had no form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. Well, as I read that, that's what the Lord spoke to my heart.

Don't ever seek to be the center of attraction anywhere. Move in the midst of my people as an ordinary brother, unknown, just a nobody in the midst of other nobodies. Can you be that? We can all be that the day we are converted.

The day we are converted, we are so small, we are so thankful that we got a place in the church. But after a while, after we become known and people appreciate us for the blessing we brought to them, then we can walk in a slightly different way. Now, if you take the cross, you don't look for that.

There's no stately form or majesty about Him. There was no appearance about Him that we should be attracted to Him. I don't want to make myself attractive to people.

I want to be hidden. I want people to see Jesus. They must be attracted to Him, and I have to get out of the way.

John the Baptist said, I must decrease if He has to increase. And you know why He doesn't increase in so many congregations? Because the preacher is not seeking to decrease. The preacher has made himself so big.

For myself, the Lord has shown me, even the way you preach, you've got to be careful that you don't make yourself so big that people begin to admire you. Disappear, disappear as far as possible. There's no appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

He was despised and forsaken by men. Paul said, we apostles are the scum of the earth. The scum, what flows in the sewage line.

That's what the apostles were. He said to the Corinthians, I don't have time to turn to this passage. You can read it in 1 Corinthians 4. In 1 Corinthians 4, He said, you Corinthians are distinguished, we are without honor.

You are accepted, we are rejected. You are honored, we are the scum of the earth. God has appointed us apostles as last of all.

There was only one person underneath them, and that was Jesus Himself. And they were the closest to Jesus, and that's why they were down there. Misunderstood, rejected, falsely accused, slandered, and they keep quiet.

You know, it says, He was oppressed, verse 7, and afflicted, and He didn't open His mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearer, He didn't open His mouth. Did not open His mouth, silent, did not open His mouth.

We need to know how to open our mouth aloud when we praise God. But that's only one side. We also need to know how to shut our mouth and be silent when we are accused falsely.

I know the number of accusations that have been leveled against me all across India. The letters I get, the articles written against me, the books written against me, and the Lord's always told me, keep your mouth shut. If they called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household? Have you read that in Matthew chapter 10? If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household? Are you a member of his household? If you are a member of his household, what are some of the names that other people have called you because you followed Jesus? Now don't tell me the names people called you because of your own foolishness.

That's different. I'm talking about the names people called you because you stood up for Jesus Christ. I'll tell you some of the names people have called me in the last 20-30 years.

Satan, son of the devil, evil spirit, antichrist, terrorist, false teacher, heretic, diatrophies, all types of things. I'm a member of Jesus' household. Following one who was called Beelzebul, following one who was called a wine-bibber and a drunkard and a gluttonous man, following one who was called a lunatic.

You read that his own family members said he was insane. Yeah, he kept his mouth shut. Why is it perhaps, ask yourself, why is it people have not called us such bad names? Perhaps because we are so diplomatic.

Like the chameleon, we can change colors when we are in different places to be acceptable. We keep quiet about certain things because that's not acceptable in this particular society. That's the chameleon.

You'll never get a bad name then. But if you take up the cross and deny yourself and stand up for Jesus, you'll suffer. I remember reading the story of Henry Sousa.

I don't know whether you heard of Henry Sousa. He was a godly man who lived in Germany many hundreds of years ago. He was a bachelor, a godly man.

He lived in a little room or house in a street. And he had a reputation down that street for godliness. And he had a great prayer.

He said, Lord, make me like Jesus. Make me like Jesus. And God answered his prayer.

And I'll tell you how. One day he heard a knock on his door. And as he opened the door, there was a woman standing there with a baby and said, Here is the fruit of your sin.

He put the baby into his hand, loud enough for all the people in the street to hear. And the tongues began to wag. Oh, so this is what this man has been up to in secret.

He'd never seen that woman in his life. He was totally innocent. This woman wanted to dump an unwanted baby and thought this is the best man to dump it on and did that.

And she went away. He closed the door, Henry Sousa, and he took the baby in his arms and said, Lord, what shall I do? And Jesus said to him, Listen to this. Do what I did.

Suffer for the sins of others. He wanted to be like me, right? Okay. He said, fine.

He never said a word to anybody down the street. He left his vindication in God's hand. And he brought up that child as if it was his own.

And he was broken. God delivered him from being bothered about the opinions of men. He began to grow up before him.

That was enough. Years later, that woman came down to that same street, convicted deeply of her sin of scandalizing a godly man like this, and proclaimed through that street that she had told a lie. But during those years, God had done his work.

He had answered his servant's prayer. He had made him like Jesus. How many of you want to be like Jesus? Are you willing to pay the price? It could be more serious than you think.

He did not open his mouth. When they said to him, You are casting out demons by the prince of demons, Beelzebul. He said, Have you spoken a word against the Son of Man? It's forgiven.

Just be careful you don't speak against the Holy Spirit. And when he was oppressed and afflicted and they made all types of false accusations against him in front of the high priest, he did not open his mouth. Pilate was amazed that he wouldn't answer anything.

That is the way of the cross. There is a verse in 1 John 4 which I want to point out to you. 1 John chapter 4. It's a very lovely verse.

1 John 4. It says in the last part of verse 17, As he is, as Jesus is, so also are we in this world. Lots of Christians have never stopped to think about that verse. Is it true or is it not true? It is true.

As he is, so also am I. Let's make it personal, each of us. So also am I in this world. As Jesus is, so also am I in this world.

This is new covenant life. No Elijah or John the Baptist could say that. That as the Son of God is, so I am in this world.

Jesus said, As the Father sent me, so send I you. He who receives you, receives me. He who rejects you, rejects me.

If you are really walking with God, walking in fellowship with God, that is really true. That he who rejects you, rejects Christ. And he who accepts you, accepts Christ.

And by this we know who belongs to God and who doesn't. He who listens to us is of God. Those are pretty arrogant statements.

John said it. And a true man of God can say it too. If he is walking with God, he who is of God will listen to us.

The others will get offended. As he is, so are we in this world. But that includes not just the authority.

Think of the tremendous authority there was in Jesus' ministry. He was so simple when he spoke. Little children could understand him.

But there was a powerful authority in that simple ministry. But back of that was a life. A life of being broken.

A secret walk with his Father. Of many, many sacrifices which we will never know about till Jesus comes again. A secret walk of self-denial.

Of keeping his mouth shut when he was provoked in his home. Of being broken under authority in his home for 30 years. And that is how he had that authority in his ministry.

And that is what the Lord wants to do for everyone of us. There is no respect of persons with God. This is not for some special people.

We may not all be called to be apostles and prophets and teachers and evangelists. But we are all called to exercise spiritual authority. That even when you speak to a person in personal conversation, there must be a spiritual authority behind that.

And that can only come through a life of taking up the cross in secret every day. I have thought of this verse in John chapter 15. Jesus said concerning the Holy Spirit's coming.

John 15 and verse 26. When the Helper is come, whom I will send to you from the Father. John 15, 26.

The Spirit of Truth. He will bear witness of me and you will bear witness also. Notice the connection there.

Notice the fellowship there. He will bear witness of me and you will bear witness of me. The meaning, the way I have understood that is, that when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you allow the Spirit of God to rest upon you, when you speak my word, the Holy Spirit will speak to those people and say, listen to that.

That's the word of God. And it's not just from a pulpit. Somebody may come to your home.

It's open for sisters. Don't people visit your home? You may never stand in a pulpit. It doesn't matter.

Somebody comes to your home and needs a word and you speak a word and the Spirit of God backs that up and says, listen to that. That's from me, says the Lord. You don't say it.

You don't stand up with proud arrogance like some of these people and some of these charismatic churches and say, thus says the Lord. I never say that. I'm scared.

Be careful of these people who go around saying, thus says the Lord and calling it prophecy. The arrogance of such people proves to me that God can never speak through them. I'm not scared of what they say, thus says the Lord.

Shall I show you the mark of how a true man of God speaks? Let me show you 1 Corinthians 7. It's blessed me. 1 Corinthians 7. I want to show you just 2 or 3 verses here. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says in verse 12, To the rest I say, not the Lord.

You see his humility there? 1 Corinthians 7. Brothers, this is not what the Lord is saying. This is what I'm saying. And he goes further.

He says in verse 25, Concerning virgins, I don't have any thus says the Lord. I don't have a command from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who has had mercy from the Lord to be faithful. I'm just giving you my opinion, brothers.

And at the end of the chapter he says, verse 40, I think I have the Spirit of God. I would any day listen to such a man than to the man who claims to be thus says the Lord. Leave it to the Holy Spirit to tell that person, that's for me says the Lord.

You don't have to say it. You'll bear witness and the Holy Spirit will take that home. And he who has ears to hear will hear.

And some will always get offended. We are not going to be an aroma of life to everyone. We will be an aroma of death to those who do not want to respond to God.

That will always be true. We will be an aroma of life only to those who want to respond to God. He who is of God listens to us.

He who is not, does not. The other thing that has come home to me very strongly in relation to going the way of the cross is this. I ask myself when and where did Jesus finally defeat Satan.

He did not defeat Satan when demons were cast out. He did not defeat Satan when he healed the sick. He did not defeat Satan even when he preached sermons.

The Bible says in Hebrews in chapter 2 and verse 14. He took part of flesh and blood that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, render powerless, nullify the power of the one who had the power of death. How did he do it? Through death.

Even Jesus defeated Satan only through death. He overcame. It says in Colossians in chapter 2 verse 14 that on the cross, verse 15, he disarmed the rulers and authorities.

It was on the cross that Satan was defeated. It was on the cross when Satan and his demons thought, at last we've got him. It's on the cross when the Pharisees said, at last we've got rid of this nuisance of a man who was exposing us.

And Jesus quietly died and Satan was defeated. That is God's way. God's way of defeating Satan is not with loud trumpets and pomp and show and crushing him like a man would crush an ant under his foot.

What's so great about that? God crushing Satan like that would mean nothing. But when God became man and in weakness allowed Satan through evil men to spit on him and beat him and kill him, a picture of weakness and helplessness, that's how Satan was overcome. And that's the way for you and me.

That's how we're going to overcome Satan in our life. That's how we're going to have authority over Satan. Satan's afraid of a man who's taking up the cross every day because he knows he cannot touch it.

Jesus said, the prince of the world comes and he's got nothing in me. John 14.30. The prince of the world comes and he's got nothing in me. As he is, so are we in this world.

The prince of the world comes and he's got nothing in me. I'm in Christ. I've got authority over him.

I've got authority over everything that he seeks to do. He cannot enter my home. I can drive him out of my home.

I can drive him out of my church. He's got no right. God is looking for men and women who will take up the cross in secret every day, who will sink into nothingness, who are seeking to become smaller and smaller

and smaller so that he can exercise his authority through them over Satan and all the inroads that Satan seeks to make into the church.

So my brothers and sisters, when he takes you through deep waters, he'll be with you. But submit. He's got a purpose.

It says in Isaiah 53.10 that it pleased the Father, oh these words, it pleased the Lord to crush Jesus, putting him to grief. It pleased the Lord to crush him. Is there another way for me, his disciple? No.

I have to go that way too. I have to be crushed. Paul says from his own experience of many years in Romans 8, we are, verse 36, we are being put to death the whole day long.

Not just once in a while. We are being put to death all day long. All day long we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

But verse 37, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. What a cry of triumph. Everyone knows Romans 8.37, we are more than conquerors.

What they don't know is Romans 8.36. All day long we are slaughtered. That's the way to be more than a conqueror. The rest is all empty words.

Are you willing to let people crucify you every day and keep your mouth shut? And the devil will come, well people will take advantage of you if you become like that. No they won't. God is in control.

He knows how to turn the pressure down when it becomes too much. He will not allow us to be tried or tested beyond our ability. That is God's way.

The Lord says to us, all of us today, come up higher. Come up higher. See things from my perspective.

My ways are not your ways, says the Lord. God's ways of serving him are not what we commonly see in Christendom today. They are hidden.

No one knows the Son, except the one to whom the Father reveals him. The Holy Spirit has come to reveal Jesus to us. And as I've traveled around Christendom in many countries, I've seen very few have really seen the way Jesus went in his earthly life.

And that's why there is so much of shallowness and emptiness. And that's why you have authoritarian leaders in Christendom who don't know what it is to wash people's feet and to be their servants. Who are just becoming bigger and bigger and bigger in the pulpit, lording it over people, crushing people, instead of being crushed themselves.

May God have mercy on us. May God open our eyes, brothers and sisters, in these last days before Jesus comes again. He's calling people.

How many of you will come to walk this way? May God find many among us. Let's bow before God in prayer. You have to make a choice.

God will never force a cross on anyone. But if you choose this way, if you fall into the ground and die, you will definitely bear much fruit. Your father who sees in secret, who sees the sacrifices you make in secret, will repay you openly.

And wherever you see a man or a woman bearing much fruit, you can be pretty sure there has been a falling into the ground and dying. There has been no shortcut to that place. I invite you, my brothers and sisters, choose this way.

The Lord says to you, come up higher. Come up higher. Don't live at that low level that Christendom around you is living.

Perhaps the low level which others in your own church are living. Come up higher today. Heavenly Father, give us grace to see the glory of this way and to walk it all the days of our life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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