

Elders ■ Be Faithful to Build Christ's Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of elders conducting their ministry with accountability to the Lord. It highlights the need for church members to submit to authority and for leaders to watch over souls with joy. The sermon discusses the concept of different circles of fellowship within the church, focusing on the inner circle of elders bearing the burden of the church. It stresses the need for elders to judge themselves rightly, to walk in a new and living way, and to communicate God's burden with authority and humility.

Scripture: Hebrews 13:17, Luke 10:1, John 17:9, 1 Corinthians 11:31, Hebrews 10:19, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Zechariah 9:1, Colossians 3:11, John 6:38

Topics: "Elder Accountability", "Church Authority and Submission"

Description

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Transcript

As we recognize that as elders we have to give an account to the Lord one day about how we have conducted our ministry, we are told in Hebrews 13 that which people in the church should submit to those who are in authority, we read that verse to you, Hebrews 13, 17 says, obey your leaders and submit to them, okay, that is their part, what about our part? These leaders keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account to the Lord one day, let them do this with joy. So there is a part there for us, you know, which is important. There's a limit to how much we can watch over as the church grows larger, it's impossible to look after everyone.

I see the Lord had circles around him, one was a large circle of thousands whom he preached, within that a smaller circle of 70 disciples whom he sent out, we read in Luke chapter 10, and within that another circle of 12, within that another circle of 11 because one was a crook, and within that another circle of three. So Jesus did not spend equal time with all these circles, there were those who were more committed to the Lord and to his purposes with whom he spent more time with and we need never feel guilty about that because not everyone in a church is going to be wholehearted. I don't think there's ever been a church in the history of the world where everybody's wholehearted.

We have to just reckon with that fact, but we need to have these different circles where we have an increasing fellowship and that inner circle should be really the elders who are in such excellent fellowship with each other bearing the burden of the church with each other, and I spoke about judging ourselves as we sang in that song. When we think of what we just read in Hebrews 13 that we have to one day give an account of our eldership as to how did we watch over people, and that's where I said we don't have to burden ourselves saying we can't watch over this whole crowd as our church increases. But we certainly need to watch over that inner circle.

Jesus himself in John 17 at the end of his life on earth, he said I'm not praying for the world, he said I'm praying for these 11 whom you've given me. So there's an inner circle who we are primarily responsible for and as they develop they will take responsibility for the others, that's how it should be. The whole burden should not fall upon us.

I've seen homes where there are children, small children taking responsibility for their younger ones, and so the burden of the parents is relieved tremendously when some of the older children are taking, older children maybe 12, 13 years old and they're taking the responsibility for the younger ones or six or seven or three or four. So that relieves the parents' burden a lot and that's the principle of eldership where we allow other brothers to also grow up and take responsibility for others. But concerning our own answerability to the Lord, there's a verse in 1 Corinthians 11:31, it's in the context of breaking of bread, but it's a general principle which is if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged.

We sang in that song, Lord help me judge myself each day to walk this new and living way. The new and living way is an expression which is rarely heard in Christendom. You hardly hear any preacher talking about the new and living way and yet it is the most important.

It's mentioned just in the book of Hebrews, help me judge myself each day to walk this new and living way. Now here it says in 1 Corinthians 11:31 that one day when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ and we have to give an answer to him, not only for everything in our personal life, the way we have lived with our wives, the way we have brought up our children, we have to answer to God believe it or not and the way we have cared for the flock committed to us. It's a big responsibility.

A lot of people think well it's a great honor to be an elder in a good church, but anyone who thinks of the honor more than the responsibility, I'd say it's not fit to be an elder. It's the responsibility that should weigh upon our heart more than there's no question of honor. I always say we have to be servants.

We have to be toilet cleaners because people create a mess. You know children dirty their diapers and we have babies, spiritual babies in our church who are dirtying their diapers. So the job of an elder is to keep changing the diapers and as new people come in there are new babies.

So it's not honor so much as much as service. I don't think we should ever think of honor. We should get that out of our mind completely and yet that is sometimes in the minds of some people.

I hope it's not in any of our minds. We think only in terms of service. We are servants, foot washers and toilet cleaners, clearing up, cleaning up the diapers constantly and never complaining.

No mother ever complained oh another diaper to clean. Never. A good mother will be glad to serve her babies and children and be happy.

I mean a mother is happy to have a child and another new person who's born again coming to seek fellowship with us. We should be thankful for her not because people come to us for any other reason other than they want to follow the Lord. So if we judge ourselves rightly in the day when the Lord examines us and he looks through the video of our entire life and he says there's nothing to judge you in.

Isn't that going to be amazing? I've often thought about that. In my mind I very often picture standing in for the judgment seat of Christ one day where nobody's going to give me a recommendation. The Lord says I don't need anybody's recommendation.

I know everything about your life from the time you were born again and everything. Of course you see we've all made mistakes but they're all we've repented. They're cleansed in the blood of Christ.

Those things are blotted out but our life, our family life and our responsibilities in the church for the Lord to be able to say I have no charge against you. Absolutely nothing for your whole life. Boy, thank the Lord.

That'd be wonderful if I could face that and I want to say to all of you my brothers that is a real possibility according to this verse. We will not be judged. That means the Lord has zero to say against us in the final day and what do we have to do? Judge ourselves rightly.

The human tendency is to judge everybody around us. We gradually cleanse ourselves from this. We have to discern the fact that we don't judge others.

Jesus said judge not which means don't condemn. We don't condemn others, anybody in our church, anybody outside the church. That's not our business.

Even this business of you think this person is going to heaven or hell. I say listen, I'm not the judge. God is the judge and I'm not here to determine who goes to heaven or hell.

But as an elder, I must discern. It's very, very important to have the gift of discernment. In fact, one of the gifts of the spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 is discerning of spirits and it's one of the great requirements of an elder that we discern beyond what a person appears to be or speaks that we look for supernatural discernment from God concerning the people in our church.

It's the only way we can help them. We're not discerning them to find fault with them. No.

We're discerning them so that we can help them like a good doctor. I remember my wife telling me when she was studying medicine in one of the best medical colleges in India, there was a particular doctor who was one of the best physicians there. He could see a new patient walking up to him to come and sit in a chair in front of him and with almost perfect accuracy discern what's wrong with him.

And he'd been so many years in that profession that he could discern by the look on a person's face, by the way he was walking, with a great deal of accuracy what was wrong with him. And I said, well, if a man can discern a man's physical condition like that through years of experience, I believe we can if we love. I believe love is a very important requirement for the Lord to give us discernment.

Otherwise, we will judge people without discernment. It's dangerous to have the gift of discernment if you don't love people, because you tend to judge them and criticize them and compare yourself with them. But if we love people and God gives us the gift of discerning, discerning in order to help people, to tell them where they're wrong, you know, the Bible says the Lord's servant, 2 Timothy 3, towards the end of that

chapter, it says the Lord's servant must not strive with people, but be gentle with all men, patient, and hoping that he will get light on himself.

2 Timothy 2, 24 onwards, the Lord's bond servant must not be quarrelsome. The Lord's bond servant must never be a quarrelsome person, 2 Timothy 2, 24. Very, very important verses for us.

I must be known as a person with whom it is impossible to have a quarrel. It would be impossible for my wife to quarrel with me because I don't respond. I mean, I respond in love, not in a super spiritual self-righteous way, but in humility.

Impossible to quarrel with me, but be kind to everyone, able to teach, 2 Timothy 2, 24, patient when wrong, with gentleness, correcting those who are in opposition. If perhaps God may grant them repentance, leading to the knowledge of the truth so that they can come to their senses. A lot of people who do wrong things in our churches, sometimes wives who are not spiritual, could be like that.

We pray that they come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil. Because the reason why people are quarrelsome and critical and taking advantage of others is because the devil has held them, verse 26, captive to do his will. The world is full of people who are held captive by the devil to do his will.

When you see something wrong, somebody in error in our church, think of that verse, think of those three verses. I mean, the Lord has spoken to that to me even recently, when I had to deal with somebody. Yeah, we must be firm, the Lord said, but you must not be quarrelsome.

You have to be kind, patient when wrong, with gentleness, correcting those who are opposed, hoping that even those stubborn ones, God will give them repentance because the devil has caught them in his will. It's like, I often think of that story where David said, I was looking after the sheep. And one day a lion came and grabbed one of those little lambs.

And David went after it. And this is the picture in my mind. Many elders would, while the lamb is in the mouth of the lion, give exhortations to the lamb.

Why in the world did you run away like that? And by the time you finished all your exhortations, the lion has eaten up the lamb. David was wise. He didn't exhort the lamb.

He didn't ask him why he went off on his own. He killed the lion. That's been often in my mind.

And when I see a person gripped in a problem, and sometimes, you know, elders or biblical wives, you got to see this. The devil grabbed that person. Don't fight with your wife.

Don't fight with that person. It's the lion. It's the devil, like we read here, held captive by him.

2 Timothy 2.26, to do his will. If I keep that in mind, always, it'd be easy to be merciful to people. At the same time, it'd be firm.

I'm not going to just let that person be like that. And maybe a time comes when you have to discipline also. I mean, the Apostle Paul once disciplined a person for sexual sin, though so strongly, that he said, I hand him over to the devil.

Imagine handing a person over to Satan, and he had apostolic authority to do that. So I'm not saying there's no place for discipline. There's a place for discipline, there's a place for putting a person out of the

church.

I've done that myself. And when it becomes serious, after repeated warnings, they don't listen. But at all times, we have to judge ourselves, so that one day, we will not be judged.

And as we judge ourselves, more and more, we will get discernment. I have said to myself that every sin that I speak about and correct in another person is something found in my flesh. My flesh is no different.

I mean, I've said to the Lord, Lord, I believe that the worst terrorist in the world, the greatest criminal, these people who are now going around attacking other countries and killing thousands of people, and people are horrified. How can a man be such a cruel man, invading another country and killing people? And I say to myself, Lord, he's got the same flesh as me. Do I really imagine that my flesh is different? Did I come from some other ancestor? No.

That wicked man came from the same ancestor I came from. And that humbles me. Why am I different? It's got nothing to do with me.

It's the grace of God that has made me different. And I take the example of an extreme terrorist or an extremely evil man. But that applies to lesser, I mean, people are not so bad.

When we compare ourselves with other people in our churches, that Lord, that brother who's got all those bad habits, he came from the same ancestor I came from. And if I've had grace to get light on the sins he doesn't have light on, it's your mercy. Nothing else.

It's your mercy. Always remember that. Then you'll be able to correct your wife.

You'll be able to correct others in the church. In the right way. What you say may be right, but very often people don't say things in the right spirit, even though they say it in the right way, even correcting our children.

I often tell parents, we have to correct our children because they've got an evil nature, their flesh. But we have to be merciful with them because they got it from us. Where'd they get it from? So don't blame them.

Help them, gently correct them. The same with people in our church, gently correcting. Now this phrase, the new and living way, I said, most people don't talk about it.

Let me turn to Hebrews and chapter 10. As far as I know, that's the only place in the whole Bible where this expression comes, a new and living way. We speak about the new covenant often in the church.

And we say we are different from the people under the old covenant in Israel. But also think of this expression, a new and living way. It's very interesting.

It says here, this new and living way, Hebrews 10 verse 19 and 20, is what takes us into the most holy place where nobody in the old covenant could go. Only in the new covenant could people enter into the most holy place. That is the significance of the veil being rent.

I'm sure you know all this, but we've often spoken about it in the temple. The moment Jesus died, the veil was rent, saying the way into God's immediate presence is open. That which people dreaded to go in, the greatest prophet, John the Baptist, could not go there.

Nobody could go in. But as soon as Jesus died, the weakest, youngest believer like Jesus and the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest in the old covenant. Entry into the most holy place.

And it says here in verse 19, brethren, we have boldness, confidence, Hebrews 10, 19, to enter into the most holy place. I know you've heard all this, but just make sure you're living there by a new and living way. The new and living way is this way through the veil.

And that veil is said here to be the flesh of Jesus. We need revelation on that. That Jesus had a flesh, not sinful flesh.

Romans 8, 3 says he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. So there was no sin in his flesh. He was born supernaturally without sin, unlike us who are born in sinful flesh.

But he had a flesh, and I translate flesh as a self-will, not a sinful flesh, but a flesh which means self-will. Did he have, did Jesus have a will of his own? That is the flesh. And it says here, the veil is symbolized as flesh and the veil being rampant.

I picture it that through 33 and a half years, stitch by stitch by stitch, that veil was rampant. It was rampant continuously. Jesus lived inside in the father's presence 24 hours of every day throughout his life.

But that was possible only because this veil was rampant. This will of his was rampant every single moment of every single day. That is what is called the new and living way.

So the curtain is not a door by which you enter in. A door you're entering in a moment. And even though it was just a curtain, to go through it is called here, not a door, but a way.

A way in which I need to do something every day to constantly enter in. So this new and living way through the veil, which is the flesh of Jesus, is the same as what Jesus said in Luke 9, 23. You've got to deny yourself and pick up your cross every day if you want to follow me.

I remember when I was a young Christian, the church I went to, Brethren Assembly, they said I must read my Bible every day, pray every day, and try to witness to people every day. These are the three things. Read my Bible, pray every day, and witness to people as far as possible.

But the Bible never says we must read our Bible every day. There was no Bible for 1400 years of us. Pray without ceasing, always.

And witness as we have opportunity. We may not have opportunity with this every day. But the one thing the Bible does say we have to do every day, I was never taught when I was a young Christian.

And most churches do not teach it. The only thing that Jesus said we must do every day, Luke 9, 23, every day, deny yourself, every day, die to yourself, pick up your cross. I need to do that, and I need to ask myself if I'm doing that, and I need to ask myself whether I'm teaching my church to do it.

Are they gripped by it? It's not that I have to preach it every day, but they must be gripped by this truth of Luke 9, 23. Many people imagine they are following Jesus, completely in their imagination. It is impossible to follow Jesus.

Let me say that emphatically. It is impossible to follow Jesus if you are not denying yourself every day. If you're not saying no to yourself from morning till night, you're in delusion when you think you're following

Jesus.

And if you are not following Jesus, you can't tell other people to follow you. Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. And he also said in 1 Corinthians 15, I die daily.

That's what I should be able to say too, like Paul. I die daily. And so then I can say to people, follow me as I follow Christ.

That is a true elder who can say to others, follow me as I follow Christ, not how well I preach. Very few people have the gift of preaching. Preaching is a gift.

It's got nothing to do with the quality of our life. I remember a period in my life before CFC started, years before that, I had a gift of preaching from the time I was 23 years old. But as I became more and more famous, I began to backslide in the time when I was 30, 32.

And I found that I still had the gift of preaching. When I look back on it, it's terrifying. It's terrifying that you can have an anointing to preach powerfully when you yourself are a backslider.

And boy, that's what drove me to me. And finally God met with me and filled me with the Holy Spirit and changed my life when I was 35. And that's when CFC started.

But I've never forgotten that, that you could preach powerfully when you're an absolute backslider in your private life. It's scary. The anointing doesn't go away.

You know that the devil was the worst person of all, still has tremendous supernatural power to do all types of things. For some reason, God hasn't taken away the gifts he gives. I mean, you don't wish you'd given a birthday gift to somebody and the guy becomes your enemy later on.

You don't go and ask him, hey, give me back the birthday gift I gave you. We ourselves don't do it. And God doesn't take back gifts he has given for some reason or the other.

He takes away the anointing. Satan is no longer the anointed sheriff, but he's the gifted sheriff. He's got, I mean, the first person who brought fire down from heaven was not Elijah.

I hope you know that. First person in history that in the Bible is the devil who brought fire down from heaven in the book of Job. And he would start people up to kill Job's cattle and children and all that.

He has tremendous power. And I've seen demon possessed people who have such women who are so strong. You need two, three men to hold them down.

How did that woman become so strong? Demons, it's tremendous power. And the demon is cast out and that woman is just like any other weak woman. It's tremendous power Satan has.

So the fact that we exercise a gift proves nothing about our walk with the Lord. And that's something many times the Lord has reminded me in past years. It's become drilled into my mind now.

Don't ever evaluate your life by the success of your ministry. It's a great danger we all face. I preached a powerful message one day.

It proves nothing about the quality of your life. People are being added to the church. It proves nothing about the quality of your life.

That is an altogether different thing. Your ministry can be very anointed when you're a backslider in your personal life. You can fight with your wife one morning and go and preach a powerful sermon on Sunday.

Well, what does it prove? I mean, you yourself know, how does that work? Maybe God gave you a gift. Proves nothing. Never evaluate.

That's what the Lord told me. Never evaluate your life by your gift or by the success of your ministry or how well you spoke some message on it. Never.

Evaluate your life by whether you're constantly humbling yourself, denying yourself every day and keeping your conscience thoughtlessly clean, especially your thoughts, quickly repenting about any word you spoke. One of the tests for me is how quickly can I apologize to someone, particularly to someone younger, if I have accidentally spoken a harsh word or a rude word immediately? I mean, is there a time gap between my awareness that I said something wrong to your wife or to somebody else and how much is the time gap between that action and the apology? It should come immediately. I always take the example of an ant.

If an ant is biting your hand, how long do you keep watching that ant biting your hand? If a thorn gets into your foot, how long do you keep it on your foot? We act immediately because we know that thorn is not going to help me. My foot's going to get infected. Do I have the same sensitivity in my conscience? This is what I've striven through the years.

It was not like that when I was first converted. But I believe if we walk with the Lord, one of the evidences would be a very sensitive conscience, an immediate awareness that something's wrong. I did something wrong in financial matters.

There's an immediate awareness. Don't do that because that is unrighteous. Don't do it.

Never mind if you lose money. The Lord has often told me, the silver and the gold in the world is mine. What are you trying to save a little money for yourself by cheating there, cheating on your taxes and telling a lie or doing something wrong? No, it's not worth it.

So these are areas where you need to be very careful. If you judge ourselves rightly, not only we will not be judged in the final day, but the life of God that flows through us will be pure. So think of the new and living way, the way of the rent veil, where if I walk that way, I will constantly be in the presence of my Heavenly Father.

And it is from that presence that I must speak. I must have seen the face of the Lord as it were in Murdi and heard him speak to my heart first. And from that presence, I come forth and speak.

It says about Moses that when he came down from the mountain, his face was shining. Now, we're not talking about physical shining there, but an anointing that comes forth because we have been in the presence of the Lord, not just that morning, but that we are living in the presence of the Lord. Moses could just go for a little while and come back.

And then it says that the glory faded away. 2 Corinthians 3, this is another passage you need to think about. 2 Corinthians 3 speaks here about a glory, verse 10.

There's a glory that surpasses verse 10, 2 Corinthians 3, 10, the glory of the old covenant. That glory was a glory that faded away, the old covenant glory. And it says it's like Moses, verse 13, who put a veil on his face.

I mean, I always used to imagine that the veil on the face was so that people don't get scared looking at his face, which may have been one reason. But here it gives another reason so that, listen carefully, so that the sons of Israel would not see that their glory is no longer there. It's fading away.

So, Moses is hiding his face because the glory is fading away. And that speaks a message to us. I have to hide something because the glory I once had is fading away in my life, and I don't want other people to know it.

Is that true? Is there an area of victory that you had once in your life, which is not there today? An area where you were really an overcomer, but you're defeated in that area today. The glory is fading away. Then comes a desire to put a veil so that others don't see that that glory is fading away.

That's old covenant. So, Moses covered his face so that the sons of Israel would not carefully look and say, hey, Moses' glory is fading away, man. But that's how it was in the old covenant.

It was in glory that you had it immediately when your presence in the Lord, and then little by little went away, and you had to cover it up. And a lot of Christians are living like that. Amazingly converted sometimes, and as time goes on, the glory is all fading away until they lose their salvation.

What is light has become total darkness. We have to be careful that the glory is not fading away. On the other hand, it says here that it should be the other way around.

You know, the veil has been taken away, it says, you know, just like the veil was rent in the temple. We don't put a veil over our face, it says. No, we don't have a veil.

If you, in the old covenant, verse 15, second Corinthians 3.15, there's still a veil over the heart. But when you turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. In other words, I must be always living in the presence of the Lord.

Moses could not do it. He'd go up and spend 40 days in the presence of the Lord, and there'd be glory on his face. And as he came down, little by little, by little, that glory fades away.

That is old covenant. Any life where the glory is gradually fading away in our life is an old covenant life. Well, the new and living way is different.

And here, it says the veil is taken away when we turn to the Lord, and the Lord is spoken of the one place in the Bible where in the New Testament, where the Lord is referring to not Jesus, but to the Holy Spirit. When we turn to the Lord, to the Holy Spirit, verse 16, the veil is taken away. And it says in verse 17, I'm talking about the Holy Spirit as Lord.

When you turn to him, the Spirit of the Lord, there'll be liberty, freedom. And so then we look at the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face. And I believe that glory is seen in the scriptures.

You know, it says about Jesus, when he walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, he took the Old Testament, which a lot of people think is a boring book. And from Genesis to Malachi, he showed them Jesus. You know, I was recently reading Ezra.

And it can be pretty boring if you read Ezra, all the list of names, this person, this person, this person, what a long list of names there are of people who came out of Babylon. And people ask, somebody asked me, what do you get out of it, Zach? And I say, well, it shows me that God is even today keeping a record of every single person who came out of Babylon. It's not just 25 people came out or 300 people came out.

And this person came out of Babylon to your church. And this person came out of Babylon to your church. And this person, that's what I get out of every scripture is inspired.

You can get something out of every scripture if you really seek the Lord. And I said, Lord, that's exciting that you didn't just put a bunch of, yeah, 150 people came out or 300 people came out, but every single name. I'm important to God.

And that new person who just got light on Babylon and came out of Babylon, he's important to God. And I get slightly, you read Ezra and I tell him, hey, your name is in the list of people who came out of Babylon. God's kept a list of it.

So every scripture is inspired. There's a glory in every part. And Jesus showed the glory of his own himself to the people in Emmaus all the way from Genesis to Malachi.

So I say, when I read the scripture of Genesis to Revelation without a veil on my face, I will see the same Jesus in every part of scripture. This is the thing I look for when I read scripture. I say, Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, you showed yourself in all the scriptures to the people of Emmaus.

Now today, I'm your disciple. Please open my eyes to see you in every part of scripture. It says with an unveiled face, I will not be able to see that glory if there's a veil on my face.

If I'm a hypocrite, that's what it means. In any area of my life, pretending to be something I'm not, I go to the scripture and I don't see Jesus. I get a doctrine perhaps, or maybe I get a message, a very clever message to preach on Sunday to impress people.

Happy with that? Lord forgive me for ever being happy that I got a message to preach on Sunday. Help me to see your glory. I don't care if I don't get any message.

I don't care if what I share is in a stumbling, broken way and not in a very ordered, systematic way. I want to see the glory of Jesus and I want to communicate to other people, not some clever thing I learned in scripture, but the glory of Jesus. So I see the glory of Jesus in the scriptures.

And you know, the mirror, it says in 2 Corinthians 3.18, James chapter one says the mirror is the word of God, the law. I come to the mirror. So I read it like this, that I look in God's word and what I see there is not a doctrine.

What I see there is not a message. If there's a veil on my face, then I get a message, then I get a doctrine. But without a veil, what I see there is the glory of Jesus.

It's so clear. I see in God's word, the glory of Jesus Christ. And I allow the Holy Spirit to transform me into that likeness, not in one single step, glory to glory to glory.

It's like our little children. They take one year to go from grade one to grade two, and we are patient with them. And God is patient with us as we go.

But we must be making progress. Grade one to grade two, to grade three, to grade four, all the way to PhD and post-grad doctoral studies and all that. We never stop.

Conformity to the likeness of Christ. This is called the new and living way. And remember, we read in Hebrews 10, through the flesh, through the flesh of Jesus.

This is why it's important for us to understand what it says in 1 Timothy 3 16. Things that I've often spoken about, but which we may tend to forget that we need to be reminded. I think Peter's words in 2 Peter 1, he says, I will keep on reminding you of what I've already told you.

And even after my departure, he says, you will be reminded because of what I wrote. 1 Timothy 3 16, there is true godliness is a mystery. A mystery is not something that can be understood by study or by our intellect.

The word mystery is never found in the old covenant. It's a new covenant word. In the old covenant, you read things like the secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, right? But mystery is something like that.

It's something that can be understood only by divine revelation, not by study. The people who studied the Bible the most in Jesus' time were the Pharisees. And they compared Jesus with what they studied.

And they said, we are sure this is Beelzebul, the devil. Imagine how blind they were. They were reading the Old Testament with Jesus explaining to the disciples in Emmaus, going to Emmaus, all about himself.

But the Pharisees looked at the same Old Testament and found the devil. That's not the Messiah. We saw Jesus is not the Messiah.

He is Beelzebul. But they had the same scriptures. They couldn't see.

They were blind. Two people look at the same scriptures, one completely blind and the other gets revelation. The Lord said to Peter, who had never studied the scriptures as much as the Pharisees, blessed are you.

You have seen that I am the Christ, the son of the living God. My father has revealed it to you, Peter, not because you're cleverer than the Pharisees. But because you're a humbler and you got a hunger after God.

And it's like that, my brothers, that revelation, mystery can only be understood by revelation, not by study. And the mystery of godliness, it's like the living Bible says, it's true that to live a God-fearing life is not an easy matter. It's a secret.

And what is the secret? The secret is in the fact that Jesus, verse 16, came in the flesh and kept his spirit pure. I paraphrase it like that, translated that, was in his spirit. His flesh was the same as ours, without sin.

He had a self-will, but he kept his spirit pure. That means he never did his own will. This is the proclaimed among the nations it says there.

John chapter 6, verse 38, which I often say is the one sentence autobiography of Jesus. Autobiography means a story of your life written by yourself. In John 6, 38, Jesus describes his entire life in one sentence.

Why did you come down to earth? Most people would say he came down to die for our sins. Jesus doesn't say that. I came down from heaven to spend my entire life never doing my own will, but doing the will of my father.

So Lord, did you have a will of your own? Yes. Otherwise there'd be no temptation. Temptation is always to do our own will.

And when Jesus was tempted, even a little thing like turn the stones into bread, the father's will was no. You're not to turn the stones into bread. Jesus was so hungry, his own will would have been, I'm hungry.

I'm desperately hungry and I'm not stealing anybody's bread. If I take one rock from here and make it into bread, that's not going to make anything. Nobody's going to lose anything by it.

I'm not stealing anybody's bread, but no, I can't do it because the father is not permitted. I remember when I left my job in the Navy 56 years ago to serve the Lord. That verse, the first temptation was the passage through which the Lord spoke to me when I left my job.

And I already had a gift to preach by then. And what the Lord said to me was that in Jesus' case, he had been anointed. He had received power.

He had power to turn the stones into bread. In other words, to meet his own need, he had been anointed, but he was not permitted to use the anointing to satisfy his own need. That God would have to provide in some other way.

And that's what the Lord spoke to me. I have given you a gift, the Lord said to me, of preaching. Never use it to get something for yourself.

Never use it to get money for yourself. That's why I was scared of ever getting money for preaching. I said, no.

Way back when I left my job 56 years ago, the Lord said, don't, the first temptation, use the power of the anointing to satisfy your own need. There it was bread. In your case, it may be money.

The Lord said, never. I'll provide for you in other ways, but never use your anointing to satisfy your own need. Whatever it is.

And never use your anointing to get honor for yourself. It may not be money. We don't take money.

We may be receiving honor because your message is so powerful, Lord. Oh, what a wonderful work you've done on some garbage like that. Never use the anointing that you've got to get anything for yourself, but use it for others.

Jesus used that anointing to give bread to 5,000 people. But he would not use that anointing to make bread for himself in the wilderness. That's what I learned.

The anointing is given to us never to satisfy our own need for anything. God will take care of that, but to serve others. And so was he tempted to do his own will? Yes.

He could be tempted to some extreme things. The second temptation was to commit suicide. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are.

Even the person tempted to commit suicide, I can say Jesus was tempted to do that and jump out of the temple. What is that? Suicide. But he refused to do it.

What is worse than suicide? Worshipping the devil. Jesus was tempted to worship the devil. The third temptation.

He said no. He was tempted in every point as we are. That is the mystery of Godliness.

He was revealed in the flesh, but he kept his spirit pure. In my own case, even after I was born again, for 16 years of my life after I was born again, I have to say I was a defeated Christian. I was in this merry-go-round.

It wasn't a very merry-go-round, but sin, repent, confess, be cleansed, and sin again, and repent, and sin again. Whether it is anger or dirty thoughts or whatever it is. You sin and you repent and you confess and you are cleansed and you sin again.

It is a constant going on in circles. This is the circle in which almost all Christians live. And they are content in that.

They are in the blood of Jesus. They treat the blood of Christ like tap water. Why is it we are very careful not to waste our money? But we are not so careful about dirtying our hands.

Because money doesn't come easily. But water is cheap. Water is cheap.

So it doesn't matter if I get my hands dirty 10 times a day, I can always wash it and wash it away. And what do I mean by treating the blood of Christ like tap water? It is, well, it doesn't matter if I sin. Because the blood of Christ is always there.

This is what's referred to in Hebrews 10, 29. Those who have treated the blood of the covenant as a common thing, the word used translated unclean in some translations, is those who have treated the blood of the covenant as something cheap and common. And the cheapest and most common thing in the world is water.

My paraphrase of Hebrews 10, 29 is those who treat the blood of Christ like tap water and thereby insult, it says in that verse, the Holy Spirit of grace, Hebrews 10, 29. Those who insult the spirit of grace by treating the blood of Christ like tap water. Oh, my hands are dirty? It doesn't matter.

Water is cheap. Just open the tap and it cleanses. We have to get people in our church out of that attitude.

All right, number one, Jesus. So as I was saying, for the first 16 years, I was defeated until one day in 1975, I think I saw for the first time, or was it 76? Anyway, about 46 years ago, just after, soon after CFC started in my home, I got light on Hebrews 4.15. I read it many times. But one day that mystery of godliness was revealed to me.

Jesus came in the flesh. That means he had a will exactly like mine. And did he have to struggle to kill it? At times, yes.

Because it says here in verse, chapter five, verse seven, in the same context, in the days of his flesh, that means in the days of when he had his own will. That's the point. It's not saying in the days when he was a human being, which is also true.

But in the days when he had a will of his own, in order not to do that, he prayed with loud crying and tears. Lord, did you have to pray with loud crying and tears to deny your own will? Yes. Because he could not afford to do his own will even for a second.

His attitude toward not doing his own will was much more radical than ours. If we slip up and do our own will for one second or one minute, he got the blood of Christ to cleanse us. What did he have? He would not be a lamb without blemish to die for our sins.

And he loved us so much that he said, I have to keep myself pure for the sake of the church. And he prayed with loud crying and tears to the one who was able to save him from spiritual death. And he was heard.

Because of his piety, because he feared. That's a great verse. So he was so eager.

This is what I mean by Christ came in the flesh and the whale was rent. It wasn't rent so easily. Here's how it was rent with loud crying and tears.

I believe that's one reason he used to go out in the wilderness often to pray so that he wouldn't disturb anybody with his loud crying and tears. And I remember asking the Lord about that myself. I said, Lord, where I live in Bangalore, there's no wilderness for many, many miles.

What do you do? How can I go there? And the Lord said, you can pray with loud crying and tears lying in your bed without making a noise. And I learned to pray with loud crying and tears in my heart without any sound coming out of my mouth. A strong, desperate cry.

Father, I never want to do my own will even for a single second. This is the only way to live in the most holy place. The whale has to be rent.

And I want to walk this new and living way and live in the Father's presence. Then there'll be a glory, not on my face, but in my heart, like Moses face on my heart will shine with something that will communicate life to others, even if it's not very clever, even if the message is not beautifully arranged with beautiful points, that's all for clever people. But here is I'm talking about a glory that shines forth.

I mean, if you look at Jesus messages, you can't pin it down to three points, like a lot of sermons, not easy. Jesus was not interested in three points. There's nothing wrong in that.

It's good to be organized and orderly instead of wandering all over like some people do when they speak. But there was life in every word. Think of the sermon on the mount.

There must be 30 different subjects in that 15 minute message or 20 minute message. So many different points. He wasn't interested in he was interested in communicating life, life.

It doesn't matter whether. And at the end of that Matthew seven, it says people recognize he's speaking with authority. That's what that's what must be there in our ministry purpose.

Because we walk a new and living way and we are living in the Father's presence, there's authority. And we live in the Father's presence, God is able to communicate his burden to us. See, burden is a word that you read.

I don't have time to show you, but you look up, it comes in Zechariah 9, Zechariah 12, the burden of the word of the Lord, the burden of the word of the Lord. I want to ask you, when you share God's word, is that a burden? Or is it just something you say? God's word must be like a burden in our heart. To me, it's like a woman delivering a baby.

Through that pain, a baby comes out, but she's carried in her womb for so long. And I believe that that's the right way to minister God's word. And there's a burden in my heart, like Zechariah speaks in chapter nine and chapter 12, the burden of the word of the Lord.

And finally the baby is delivered. And then there's a relief when a baby is delivered in a woman's mind and body. So it must be when we have communicated something that has been a burden.

And it's not a strain. I believe that over a period of time, this has become the way as we seek the Lord and say, Lord, I want to be able to communicate your burden. Give me your burden.

And like it has been said, you know, if our hands are full, the Lord cannot put anything else into our hands. I come to the Lord for his word. I must have come with empty hands.

Lord, my burdens are cast upon you. Psalm 55, it says, cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you. So if I have many worries and anxieties about myself and my family and this, that and the other, I must cast that on the Lord first before I can empty my hands and receive his burden, which I want to communicate to the church.

And we live in a world with so many problems and tensions that there can be so many other things on our mind. We can't avoid it. We have needs in our family.

Somebody is sick and some problem is there. But I must make it an effort to cast that on the Lord. Lord, I want my hands to be empty.

Give me your burden as I seek to communicate it to your people. And walk that way, the Lord will be able to do his work. And then what we build will not be an old covenant congregation or an old covenant club, but a new covenant church, the body of Jesus Christ.

It takes time. I don't think it will happen overnight and not everybody will be built. There will always be people who come around as visitors, but there will be a core, what I call a church within the church, the real church.

I believe it's like that. It's like the Lord preached to many people. In 1 Corinthians 15, it says 500 people saw him after the resurrection.

500 saw Jesus after he rose from the dead. Can you imagine seeing a man come out of the grave alive after he was crucified and buried? And that man says, wait in Jerusalem. And 120 out of the 500 waited in Jerusalem.

Where were the other 300 maybe who saw Jesus risen from the dead? I don't know. But I see it's like that in the church today. There are people who believe Jesus rose from the dead, except in Christ and all that, but very few are eager to wait for the Father, the Holy Spirit upon their life.

Those who wait on the Lord, build the church and fulfill its purpose. So may the Lord fulfill that in our life and help us in our ministry. One of the great privileges that all of us have is in many of our churches, we

have people from different nationalities.

That's a wonderful thing. Colossians 3 says there's no distinction between Greek and Jew and Scythian and barbarian and slave and free man. We have people with varying ranges of income in our church.

People with very high income, very low income. Praise God. We're not communists.

We're trying to equalize everybody. I always say it's like the fingers of our hand. The communists say, cut it all off and make it all equal.

God says, no, the fingers are all different sizes. And God made our church full of people, people with different levels of income, different sizes of housing, different nationalities. And that's what enriches the body of Christ.

I know it's tremendously enriched me, being in India, mixing with people of various languages and various levels of income and meeting everyone of them equally. No difference at all. It's one of the tremendous privileges we have in our churches.

I tell you many churches in India, almost, sorry, many churches in the United States and Canada, everybody's of the same race. You go there and you look around, everybody's the same race. Maybe everybody's white or everybody's black.

Okay. God bless them. But thank God that we have the privilege of mixing with people who are different in personality, in race and everything else, with that background and everything else.

And it's like Colossians chapter three, where it says there's no distinction between Jew and Gentile and free man and slave and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. It's one of the great privileges we have. Thank God for that and that we can build a body like that and be a testimony to the world.

Yeah. A lot of things one can say, but I think I've communicated what has been on my heart. Let's just pray.

Let me go to the next part of our time together. Heavenly Father, there's so much that you always want to speak to us. There's never an end to what you have to say to us.

Never, never an end. We want to be always hearing. We want to always be hearing.

Help us to develop that habit. Like you said to Martha, one thing is meaningful. Mary has chosen that good part, to sit at my feet and listen to my word.

Help us, Lord, to see the one thing that's meaningful every day of our life and to have more clarity on this new and living way through the flesh. Help us each one. You called us, we believe, to be your servants, to wash people's feet, to clean their diapers.

Help us to do it faithfully, to give forth your word as your prophets. Help us to walk in humility. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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