

Finishing the Course - 10 Authoritative Praying

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon urges Christians to embrace their identity as dignified ambassadors of Christ, exercising authority through prayer and living lives that honor God.

Duration: 36:55

Scripture: Matthew 28:18

Topics: "Finishing Well"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of serving the Lord in India without relying on financial support from others. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the needs and struggles of the people we are called to serve, and encourages fasting as a way to empathize with the hungry. The speaker highlights the unique calling of Christians to represent Christ in a different way and to obey everything that Jesus commanded. He reminds believers of their authority and dignity as ambassadors of God's kingdom, regardless of their material possessions. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations, emphasizing the speaker's commitment to continue preaching and serving until the end of his life.

Transcript

Brothers and sisters, I feel one of the great lacks in our country is that we don't have enough servants of the Lord who can manifest the dignity and the authority of being a servant of the Most High God. Many of you have, all of you perhaps, have decided to serve the Lord. I want to try and put not only a desire but a passion in your heart to show to this land the dignity and an authority of a servant of the Lord.

We, I don't want to criticize, it's not my job, I don't want to join hands with the accuser of the Brethren Satan, but if you open your eyes and look around this country you know that the name of Jesus is dishonored not by non-Christians but by the way Christians live. That has been the burden of my heart. I've been in full-time Christian work for 36 years.

I was a young man when the Lord called me to his service. I was 24 years old when God called me. I was working and it took two more years before the full-time Christian work.

It's more than 36 years ago and I've had this conviction all these years that the name of the Lord is dishonored in this land by the way Christians live. And Christians live like that because their leaders live like that. And I know from a young age I had a desire.

I didn't think I was better than anybody else. I still don't think I'm better than anyone else but I felt that I should do what I could to manifest the dignity and authority of a servant of God. The Bible says in 2nd Corinthians 5:20-21 that we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

We know that in the world today there is one superpower and that's the United States of America. The United States of America has got an ambassador in India. How do you think he would conduct himself in this country? Would he come begging at your door for money saying please help me? Supposing a man with a suit and a tie of fair westerner came to your door one day and knocked at your door and said I'm the ambassador of the United States but I'm a little hard up for money.

Can you give me some money? He wouldn't believe it. He'd say you're a liar. You can't be the ambassador of the United States begging.

But if a man comes to the door and says and I'm an ambassador of Jesus Christ can you please give me some money we believe it. Why is that? Because in the thinking of a lot of Christians okay the United States is a superpower and there are many other powerful countries and then you go down to all the other Asian African countries and right at the bottom is the kingdom of God. Isn't that sad? So we assume that the ambassador for the kingdom of God must be a poor pathetic man whom nobody helps.

This is the image that Christian workers have presented to this country. Let me tell you there is only one superpower in the universe and that's the kingdom of God and I am an ambassador of that kingdom. I don't have to beg.

In Psalm 50 the Lord says if I were hungry I would not tell you. I own the cattle on a thousand hills. I have a father in heaven.

He's not only a very rich father. He's a very powerful father and I am his son and his way to show his power through you and me is not by making us millionaires and billionaires. No it's by keeping us helpless and weak but providing all our need.

The Bible says in Philippians 4:19 my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus and you and I must be a living demonstration of the truth of that word. We are not beggars. We're kings.

What does it mean to have no need? Does it mean to have a large bank account? I remember when I left my job in the navy after eight years of serving the after eight years of earning a very large income. I had zero in my bank account. When I left my job I gave everything for the Lord's work.

I stepped out with empty hands. My father was retired. He was not rich.

He couldn't support me. When I got married my wife and I used to earn 150 rupees a month. That's 34 years ago but I never begged.

I never wrote prayer letters asking people to support me. I had a father in heaven who was testing me. It was good for me.

Two three years went by like that. Those were the best years of our married life. We didn't have much in the world but we had God.

We had each other. We loved the Lord. We loved each other and we wanted to serve the Lord.

And the lessons I learned in those years were very precious. I learned how poor people in India live. I had not learned that before.

God had to teach me. When we fast we learn how hungry people feel. If you have never fasted for a day or two you don't know what hungry people feel like.

How can you serve the Lord in India? We have to represent Christ in a different way from the way he's been represented in this land in all these years. And I hope that burdens you. The first prayer that Jesus taught us to pray was hallowed.

Our father in heaven hallowed be thy name. I want to ask you, all of you, make that the first prayer of your life for many many many years. That has been the first prayer of my life.

I have not prayed that I will be a great preacher. I've not prayed that I'll have a great ministry. I'm not interested in those things.

I have prayed one prayer. God is my witness. Lord let your name be glorified in India.

That's where God's called me. And we have, when we started a church 27 years ago right in my home, that's what I taught them to pray. And through the years as the Lord has raised up different churches, this is what I've shared with others.

Pray hallowed be thy name in India. Thy kingdom come in India. Thy will be done in India as it is done in heaven.

Don't just pray that once in a while in a prayer meeting. Pray in your heart all the time. Some of my best times of prayer are 2 30 in the morning when I wake up, not deliberately, just happen to wake up.

My heart longs after God like the psalmist says in the night watches, I will long after you and my prayer is hallowed be thy name in India. Lord glorify your name in this land. Break the backbone of idolatry in this land.

There is no country in the world which has as many idols, physical idols as India. And if you want to know how God hates idols, just read the old testament prophets. Just read the old testament prophets.

They denounced idolatry. They hated it. Imagine the God of this universe being represented by an idol.

You know how I looked at it? Supposing I visited my children's home and they had a picture of a cockroach on the wall and underneath written dad, dad, a cockroach. How would I feel? I said, am I children trying to insult me by putting a picture of a cockroach saying dad underneath? Will you do that to your father? That's what people are doing to God in this land. It says when Paul was in Athens and he saw the idols everywhere, his spirit was stirred within him.

You read in Acts 17, spirit was stirred. We've got so used to seeing it that our spirit is not stirred anymore. If your spirit is not stirred, you're moving towards death, spiritual death.

We can do evangelism. We can give out tracts. We can do christian work and we may not be spiritual.

Our longing may not be that God's name should be hallowed. I want to urge all of you young people, do not be like the compromising, half-hearted, wishy-washy christian workers that you've seen in this land

who fear man more than they fear God, who have no word from heaven, who do not hear God. Don't misunderstand me when I say that.

I've been 43 years a believer. I have never once heard the voice of God with this ear. I have never seen a vision.

I have never seen an angel. I have never physically seen Jesus Christ. I've never even seen a light.

I'm telling you honestly. I live by faith. Which is better? Would you be more impressed if I got up here and told you that an angel came and told me something? I saw an angel one day or I saw a vision.

Would you be more impressed by me? Let me tell you the words of Jesus which he spoke to Thomas in John chapter 20. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. I belong to that category.

I've never seen, never heard and I have believed. I am more blessed according to the word of Jesus. That is one of the beatitudes.

Don't think the beatitudes finished in Matthew chapter 5. No, there are other beatitudes in other places like Acts 20-35. Blessed are those who give rather than those who receive. In John 20, blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.

Don't be discouraged if you have never heard the voice of God with your ear. You and I are in the same boat. Don't be discouraged if you have never seen a light, never seen a vision.

You and I are the same. Don't think you can't serve God unless you see visions and dreams and lights. God's word is enough.

It has been enough for me. It's brought me to a life of overcoming sin. It's brought me to a life of perpetual joy.

I used to be a very discouraged, depressed type of person when I first started serving the Lord, but it's gone. It's gone from my life. I can't think when was the last time I got discouraged.

I'm tempted many times to be discouraged, but I refuse to be discouraged. Whenever I'm tempted to be discouraged, I say, well, God's on the throne. My sins are all forgiven.

The devil's been defeated on the cross. God is working all things for my very best, according to Romans 8, 28. Why should I be discouraged? I don't see any reason to be discouraged.

It's only feelings. And I say, I refuse to live by feeling. I live by faith.

I don't need to see. I don't need to hear. God's word is enough.

Jesus, we read about the way we should live on earth in 1 John chapter 4. Let me read you this verse. 1 John 4 and verse 17. It's an amazing word.

And I would encourage you to take it very seriously in your life. The last part of verse 17. As Jesus is, so are we in this world.

It's such an amazing statement. It's almost unbelievable. I would not believe it.

If it were not in scripture. As Jesus is. And I want to apply to myself.

You apply to yourself. So am I in this world. I'm in this world.

How am I supposed to be in this world? As Jesus is. Why do I go preaching God's word? Like I've done for 40 years. You know, it's not because of a need.

Let me tell you honestly. I don't preach because there's a need here. Because there's a need there.

That's true. But that's secondary. Jesus never told me.

There's a need there. Go and preach. I read that in missionary magazines.

Not in the bible. And I read the bible more than I read missionary magazines. I read missionary magazines.

But if there's a conflict between missionary magazines and the bible. I go by the bible. I'll tell you why I go and preach.

Turn with me to Matthew 28 verse 18 and 19. And I hope you will remember this all your life. Because it will make the basis of your preaching very different.

As it has made mine. Matthew 28 verse 18 it says. All Jesus said.

All authority. You got to read slowly. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Therefore, therefore, therefore go to all nations and make disciples. Baptize them. Teach them to do everything I commanded you.

That's what I do. India is one of those nations mentioned in verse 19. What should I do in India? I have to go.

I can't sit at home. If God gives me health. If I'm 90 years old.

I'll still be going. I won't sit at home. I haven't sat at home for 40 years.

And I'm not going to sit at home till the end of my life. I'm going to go. I can't do what other people can do.

Because God hasn't given me their gifts. But I can do what I can do. According to the gifts God has given me.

You can't do what I can do. Because God your calling and gift may be different. Don't don't ever try to do what I do.

I tell people in my church. Please don't try to preach like me. That's not your calling.

You are called to do something different. But you are called to go. Not sit at home.

Why should I go? Not because there's a need. But because my Lord has got all authority in heaven and earth. He's got all authority in heaven and earth.

And that authority is not being recognized over there. So I have to go there and establish the authority of the Lord there. It may be a place where no gospel has never gone.

That's where the evangelist goes. To establish the authority of the Lord in that part of the earth where it's not established. Or it may be a church.

That's where most of my calling is. Where the same problem. The authority of the Lord is not established in that church.

It's the devil's authority in that church. It's human authority in that church. And the Lord says go.

I've got all authority in heaven and earth. Go and proclaim my authority in that church. Go and proclaim my authority in that village.

That is our calling. That gives a completely different perspective to preaching the gospel. And that's why I teach people to obey everything that Jesus commanded.

Because he must have authority over your life. We are called to exercise that authority as Jesus is. So are we in this world.

Jesus says I am in heaven now I have sent you. As the Father sent me so send I you. My brothers and sisters see your the dignity of your calling.

You're an ambassador of the only superpower in the universe. What does it matter if we don't have much money? I know many a time when I have ridden a scooter in Bangalore on the streets of Bangalore and I see people going past me and people half my age going past me in those expensive cars. Who Christian workers who bought it with American money.

I say this is my testimony. You can go in that. I'd like to see who's got more authority.

Don't long for cars and possessions. It's very easy just join up with some organization get a lot of money and live in a fancy way. I'm not against it if you want to do that do it.

But brother if the price you pay for that is that you lose spiritual authority it's not worth it. That's what I'm trying to say. Say Lord that I'll tell you honestly I don't care whether I live in a hut or a house.

I don't care whether I ride a bicycle or a fancy car to make these things don't make any difference to me. They're all the same. A car and a bicycle are exactly the same to me just to take me from one place to another.

That's all. I long for authority in my life and I say Lord if there's anything in my life that will rob me of spiritual authority I'm going to get rid of it. You got to be 100% faithful with money if you want to have spiritual authority in your life.

There's a lot of leakage in Christian workers because they're not faithful with money. There's a lot of leakage in Christian workers because they're not faithful with their speech. How can God use your tongue in the pulpit if you gossip with that same tongue at home? You can't lease out rent out your tongue to the devil six days a week and then expect God to use that tongue on Sunday.

No. We are careless with our tongues. That's why we don't have authority when we speak.

And if we are careless with money God will not give us the true riches. To establish the authority of Christ in every church in this land, in every part of this land, to break the backbone of idolatry, to pray that Jesus Christ will be honored in this land, that's our calling. That the heathen will know that Jesus Christ is Lord, that Almighty God will stretch out his hand to do signs and wonders in the name of Jesus in this land.

Make that the burden of your prayer. That's the burden of my prayer. Send revival into your church, Lord, and don't stop there.

Say, Lord, use that other church if you like. You don't have to use our church. Every week we pray that, Lord, you don't have to use our church.

Please use the other church. Use any church but send revival into this land. Let the heathen know that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Revive your church. Jesus said in Luke chapter 10 and verse 19, I give you authority. I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy.

What a verse. I have given you authority over serpents, scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall injure you. There's a difference between power and authority.

Satan has got more power than me. He can do things I cannot do. He can travel the earth in a second.

I can't do that. He can do certain, you know, these black magic miracles, which God has not given me the power to do. I don't want it.

But he doesn't have more authority than me. He may have power, but I've got authority over his power. That's what this verse says.

I give you authority over all the power of Satan. Okay, he's got power. So what? I've got authority.

Let me give you an illustration. See one of these big trucks coming down the road. Now if I stand in front of that truck, who's got more power? Me or that truck? That truck can run down a hundred people like me.

And to think if ten trucks come like that at me, can I stand there? No. How is it then that a small little policeman stands in the middle of the road and lifts up his hand, and all these ten trucks stop? That's authority. Authority over the power of these trucks.

That's the authority the Lord has given us over demons, over Satan. So let them have more power. I've got authority over you.

We need to exercise that authority in prayer. We need to seek God to exercise that authority. We don't need many people to do it.

We read in Matthew chapter 18 that Jesus said, if two or three are gathered together in my name, verse 20, I am in the midst. And what you bind on earth, verse 18, will be bound in heaven. Which heaven? Not the heaven where God is, but the heavenlies, where the devil and his demons are.

To bind something in the heavenlies, you don't need 200, 300 people. Supposing the Lord had said, where 200 or 300 are gathered together, there I am in the midst. Then I'll tell you, I'll never join a small church, because the Lord can't be there.

Thank God he said only two or three. I need only two or three, but they must be agreed. They must be agreed totally in unity.

That's number one. That's a very important requirement. You need only two or three people, but they must be united, completely one.

The other thing it says in Psalm 66, verse 18, is if I have sin in my heart, not in my life outside, in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. There are two very important requirements to exercise authority in prayer. Your heart must be clean, and you must pray with one or two other people with whom you are 100% one.

And the devil is more afraid of a church where everybody is seeking to live in purity, and which is united, even if that church consists only of three people. The devil is not afraid of a church with 3,000 people, with a lot of impurity in their lives, and a lot of disunity, with husbands and wives quarreling and things like that. The devil is not afraid of that.

Yeah, it's amazing what God can do. About 25 years ago, let me give you a little experience that I had. You know, the Bible says we got to pray, 1 Timothy 2, for those in authority in our country, that we can live a peaceable life.

I was up in Kashmir preaching the gospel 25 years ago. I don't remember exactly. It was some, I think it was the month of April that year, and I think it was a dream I had at about 2 30 in the morning.

I'm not interested in politics. I've never voted in my life. I don't belong to any political party.

But in my dream, I saw the face of the then home minister, and I didn't know what it meant. And I saw in that dream the faces of a lot of Indian people of different parts of India, and the word came to my heart, the power to free these people is in the church. And I didn't know what to do.

What am I supposed to do with this dream I had of this man? And when I don't know what to pray, I pray in tongues. So I didn't know what to pray, so I just prayed in tongues concerning this man. And as I read in the papers, things began to happen.

I found that that man resigned from the parliamentary party a few months later. He resigned from his the home minister responsibility, and there became a conflict between him and the prime minister, and I knew something was happening. I shared this with the people in our church, and I said, I said, I don't know what this means, but I believe there's something here God wants to do.

And whenever I saw in the papers that people were trying to bring this home minister and prime minister together, again the burden would come upon me, and I would pray. Well, most of the time in tongues. And then about eight months after I first saw this, there was a man who was an MP who got up in parliament to present an anti-conversion bill.

It's one of the first ones that came. People tried to pass for the whole country, and they could not pass it because this party was so deeply divided. That this man was against that man, and this man had his group, and that man had that group.

Then I realized why God gave me that burden eight months earlier, and why we prayed in our church. We're not a big church, small. I remember another time when in Bangalore, all the all the factories, Bangalore is a place full of factories, all the factories went on strike, and it was a terrible, terribly serious

situation.

And people were out on the streets, and one day the police fired, and some people were killed, and it was almost like Bangalore would go on fire. It was like a dynamite about to burst. We called a three-day prayer meeting in our church, and I told the people in the church, the police can round up all the gundas and the people who cause trouble, but they can't touch the spirits that are causing this problem.

We've got to bind the spirits that are causing all this violence. We've got to help the police by binding up the spirits up there. And we prayed for three days, and the whole situation changed.

And we know it was the result of our prayer, because one of our members went to work in the factory after the factories opened. The security man in the factory just happened to say, he's a non-Christian man, he said, he says, our life was so tense here until this particular date. I think it was February 12th or something.

Suddenly something happened, and the whole situation changed, and I know what happened. The power of those spirits was broken that day. That's the time we prayed.

It doesn't depend on numbers. It depends on purity of heart and unity. Wherever you go, look for people who long for purity of heart.

It says, pursue righteousness with those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart in 2 Timothy 2. Those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart, even two or three, can exercise an authority, binding satanic forces, exercising the authority of Jesus Christ in this land, even over political forces. Every time there's an election, we come together to pray, believing that we're going to accomplish more by prayer than by casting a vote. I want you, brothers and sisters, to grow up from a young age, believing tremendous authority that Jesus Christ has given us.

It doesn't matter if we are poor. Think of the when Jesus was standing before Pilate, beaten, stripped, his clothes torn, and Pilate sitting in his grand robes. Who was the rich man there, and who was the poor man? And who was the man with so much worldly power, and who was the one who was looking like a beggar? But who was the man with spiritual authority there? It was Jesus Christ.

He who did not have a place to lay his head, he was the one with spiritual authority. He stood there with his beaten blood flowing from his body, with the dignity and the authority of a representative of the one superpower in the universe. And that man with his grand robes was a king, was a slave.

He was afraid of men. Jesus was the king that day. I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, you and I are called to be kings.

It's more important to exercise spiritual authority than to have grand houses and lands and position and all these things. May God help you to be worthy representatives of Christ in this land. Let's pray.

Will you pray one little prayer today that you'll never forget all your life, what you heard this evening. Will you pray, God, I'm a weak person, but will you please make me a worthy representative of the one superpower in the universe, a worthy ambassador of Jesus Christ. Lord, hallowed be your name in India.

Thy kingdom come in India. Thy will be done in India as it is done in heaven. Father, I cannot say, I cannot express the burden in your heart.

Help us to see it. That we can share a little bit of the burden, Father, that you have in your heart for this wonderful land of India, where there are 1,000 million people whom you love. Help me, help each of us to share a little bit of the burden of your heart to be real, genuine Christians.

Not to play the fool in these last days, not to play games, but to walk in humility, in brokenness, in purity, that your power and authority and your anointing will be upon us. That we can move things for you, establish your authority across this land. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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