

God Looks for Wholehearted People

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of purity, fellowship, and discernment in living a life that pleases God and following the narrow way to life.

Duration: 57:56

Scripture: Jeremiah 5:1, Ezekiel 14:14, Matthew 7:13-14, John 2:13-17, Acts 2:17

Topics: "Sacrificial Service", "Christian Integrity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the need for individuals to stand in the gap and hold to the highest standards of God's Word, not seeking personal reputation but solely desiring to reflect the character of Jesus. It challenges listeners to be like burning bushes, willing to serve sacrificially and confront corruption in the church, standing firm even if it means being misunderstood or going against the norm.

Transcript

It is in times of trial that we really discover whether we have faith or not, that we discover whether we are Christians or not, that we discover whether we are in the new covenant or the old covenant. We must learn to look at everything that we face on earth as something that, not sent by God, could be sent by the devil. That is the worst thing, something sent by the devil.

Less than that is something that comes, as I said, because of the curse on this earth. For example, you get a flu or a tummy upset or something. That's not sent by the devil.

I don't blame the devil for everything. It's because we are in a world, and I believe that 80% of sicknesses that are in the world is not sent by the devil. It's because we live in a world that's under the curse.

But some things are also sent by the devil. Mostly temptations, particularly those who are Christian leaders, are primary targets of Satan. The more you rise in Christian maturity and leadership, remember the devil is targeting you more.

We are protected if we have fellowship. If you're humble enough to acknowledge the need for fellowship with others, you're protected. You know how our hand protects something from coming and hitting us.

Our legs will bend down so that if somebody throws a stone, it doesn't hit our head. The whole body cooperates so that my head doesn't get hit, my chest doesn't get hit, and my face doesn't get hit. The face can't protect itself, but the hands come up.

It's wonderful to be in the body. Wonderful to have a body of believers who are committed to you, who are under the headship of Christ, who are committed to Jesus and therefore one another. That's why it's so important to build local bodies.

Most Christians that I have met are lonely people. They can sit in a church of 30,000 people. It's 30,000 lonely people sitting in that church.

People call it a mega church. Rubbish. It's not the body of Christ.

I'd rather have... I often use the illustration of a little baby whose hands and fingers and legs and all work together. I mean even a little three-year-old can protect itself from danger. But think of a huge giant whose limbs are paralyzed.

Even if somebody throws a stone at his face, his hands can't protect his face. He's huge. 30,000 people.

Not a body. No connection with the head. That's the tragedy with so many churches.

Jesus is not building large churches. He's building his body. Body is that which functions together.

And so I believe it's very important in these days. If you read in the New Testament, the burning bush is first of all a picture of our personal life. Secondly, it must be a picture of our family.

Your home must be like a burning bush where you have certain standards. Maybe you cannot control your children once they leave your home. But at least when they are in your home, you must have certain rules.

That in this home we don't allow certain types of music. We don't allow certain types of magazines. And even if you have a television, you just don't allow certain programs to be watched.

We have certain rules here. Maybe you have a rule that you don't have a television at all. That's fine.

I mean that's up to you. I mean the internet is 10 times worse than the television. So it's really pointless getting rid of your television and having a computer with access to the internet.

So the main thing is to protect our home. The home is under tremendous attack today. And you can see how Christendom has lowered its standards by just one fact.

The number of divorces there are among believers. I've heard in some western countries it's the percentage of divorces among believers is equal to the percentage in the world. That means what is the difference between the church and the world? Zero.

Is the church the light of the world? No. The darkness of the world has come inside the church. And the saddest thing is there are churches where they even conduct remarriages of these divorced people.

And even the leaders are divorced and they continue to be a pastor. It's sort of accepted. Because he's got a gift.

With gift you build Babylon. Even with the gifts of the spirit. It's the fruit of the spirit with which we build Jerusalem.

You can remember the simple rule. Jesus said beware of false prophets, Matthew 7, who will tell you that the narrow way is not so narrow. Who will tell you the broad way is the narrow way.

That's the mark of a false prophet. I mean if you want to see that turn to Matthew chapter 7 if you want to know what a false prophet is. It's the first time that Jesus spoke about false prophets in the New Testament.

First occurrence of false prophet in the New Testament. Always read a verse in its context. We have to get rid of this bad habit that Christians have of reading through the Bible quickly, reading verses which are not in its context.

So let me read together in its context slowly and you'll understand it. And you'll discover that I don't have any different Bible from yours. But I'm just reading it slowly in its context and you suddenly get light.

If you let me read to you Matthew chapter 7 and you know basically after speaking this wonderful sermon on the mount that started in chapter 5. In a sense he sums up everything in verse 12. Matthew 7 verse 12. He says the law and the prophets.

The law and the prophets that phrase used there refers to the Bible. That was the Bible of the Old Testament those days. Today we can instead of saying law and the prophets we can say Bible.

Okay verse 12 reads like this. The whole message of the Bible is treat other people the way same way you want them to treat you. Do you want to lust? Do you want somebody to lust after your pretty daughter? Tell me.

Do you want somebody to lust after your pretty young wife? No? Then please don't lust after somebody else's daughter or somebody else's wife. And everybody in the world is somebody else's daughter or somebody else's wife. In other words don't lust after any woman in the world just like you don't want anybody to lust after your daughter.

Treat other people the way you want to be treated yourself. If you follow this rule I guarantee you'll never lust after another woman for the rest of your life. You look at that prostitute who's selling her body for money and who exposes herself on some internet sites.

Thank God I've never been to any one of them till today. I'll never go to one of them in my life. I get all these emails that you also get.

Click here click here and I know where they're leading me. I don't even click. I hear people say oh brother it came up.

It doesn't come up. You choose for it. Do you think my computer knows that I'm a 70 year old man? No it doesn't.

The computer doesn't know how what age is the fact it's sitting there. You click and you choose. Is it possible never to go to an internet site to pornographic site? Yes.

I've never gone to one in my whole life and I've used computers for hours and hours and hours. You choose to go. You see some emails and you know that that's not good for you.

You want to treat that woman poor woman. When I hear of these women I say here's a poor woman who's selling her body to the devil. What am I going to do finance that? What am I going to look at that and instead of saying Lord here's a soul who's destroyed herself please save her soul.

Jesus died for that woman. See we are not serious Christians. No wonder our mind is polluted when God cannot speak to us.

And if you're an elder brother how in the world can you speak God's word if your mind is polluted? Treat other people the way you want them to treat you and if it's a girl treat other women the way you want people to treat your young daughter from today. How do you want people to treat your young daughter who's maybe studying in a college? Do you want her to strip her body and show it to someone for money? No then you don't go looking at such pictures yourself even in a magazine or anywhere. Feel sorry for the people who do that.

Be a serious Christian. I believe God can raise up prophets in our country. I remember I asked the Lord once.

Lord there are 1 billion people in this country. Where are the prophets in Christendom who will speak to this country speak to the church in India? And the Lord said I called many people to be prophets but they all fall by the wayside. Some go after money and some go after women and some go after impurity.

Ultimately they don't become prophets. They all become martyrs. Activity, activity, mission work, giving money, here doing this, doing that, doing the other thing with a lack of purity.

God cannot make an impure man into a prophet. You know that God wants to give us the gift of prophecy. He wants to make as many of us prophets in our own locality.

You can't have one for the world or one for India or one for Tamil Nadu or one for Kerala. You need many many many in different different religions and God wants you to be one of them but you've got to treat other people the way you want to be treated yourself. Do you want people to sit in their house and speak evil about you behind your back? No then you don't sit in your house and speak evil about them.

Supposing somebody hears a false report about you or about your children. What do you want them to do? You will want them to come to you and say brother I heard somebody say this. I just wanted you to know it and then you explain to them listen the whole thing is false.

It's the end of the matter and you're thankful that that person didn't go to anybody else but came straight to you to check up. Do exactly the same for other people. You know how I got rid of gossiping in my house.

Somebody comes to me and say brother you know you heard this and I say no I never heard it. Thank you for telling me just hang on I'll just call that brother right now on my phone. No brother this is only for you it's for prayer.

I say no I have a habit that anybody tells me something I go straight to that person and say brother I heard this. Do you think that person will come to my house and gossip again? No. People send me emails.

Good I will check with that person. Is that true? And they get all upset. Such people will never send me email gossips anymore.

Some just say what to do brother people gossip. Supposing somebody brought a garbage bin a garbage bag full of stinking garbage came to your sitting room and said hello praise the lord brother all that garbage in your sitting room. And you know it doesn't smell nice but you say how to offend people.

I don't like to offend people. You know what he'll do? He'll come tomorrow with some more garbage. But I tell you most Christians that I've met are more careful about keeping their sitting room clean than keeping their hearts clean.

What do you think God will do with such people? You think he'll make them prophets? Not in a hundred years. Those are more interested in keeping their sitting room clean than their heart. Dear brothers and sisters take this seriously.

So let me come to Matthew 7. Treat other people the way there's a whole message there. The way you want to be treated yourself. This is a very narrow gate.

I'm paraphrasing now verse 13. All that I have said from Matthew 5 to 7 is a very narrow gate. It's not easy but and you can't take your wife through there.

You can't take your children through there. It's like these style gates. There only one person can go at a time like in some railway stations.

One person goes then the style comes down. The next person has to choose a very narrow gate. Only place for one person to walk.

I'd like to take my wife and children with me. They don't fit. They've got to come on their own.

And there's another gate that's wide and broad that leads to destruction. But the way to life is not just a gate. It's a gate verse 14 that leads to a way.

See the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life. You don't get to life just by getting through a gate. You've got to go through a gate and walk the way.

There is no such thing as once you've gotten through the gate it's all there. Once you're saved you're always saved. No there's a way.

And false prophets the next phrase is and the other thing is there are few who find it. I know there are people who are praying for India to be saved. I think they haven't read Matthew 7 14.

Or what they mean by saved is raise your hand and say Jesus is coming to my heart. I'm not looking for that. I'm talking about disciples who are walking the narrow way.

Very very few will find it. And I said Lord I've been preaching this for 30 years and I met a lot of people who understand it. And the Lord said yeah many understand it but very few find it.

Many understand it but very few find it. Because they're not interested in finding that way in their daily life. They're interested only nodding their heads and saying yeah what a great truth brother Zach.

I was so blessed by it. But they don't seem to find that way in the problems that arise in their relationships with their husband, wife, mother-in-law, father-in-law, neighbors, etc. and brothers and sisters.

They're not interested in finding the narrow way that I need to find in this particular problem that came up. What shall we do when beyond the circumstances of anybody in this compound because of the fact that we live in an underdeveloped country because systems are not good that the sewage system overflows and corrupts the bore well that pumps water. What do you do? It's beyond anybody's control.

So when I hear that one or two CFC brothers, I don't mean CFC Bangalore, one or two brothers goes and shouts at the staff here we have to go and apologize to them. I say what do you use such people coming for a conference? I don't know who did it but I would ask you please go to Brother Ian, identify yourself and go to that person and apologize. We don't shout at anybody even if they kill us.

Where will you be crucified one day as a martyr for Jesus Christ? Did you see the choreography yesterday? If bad water upsets you, where are you going to die for Jesus one day? It's all rubbish. That's why I say most of us are not serious Christians. We come, we like to have come for a conference, hear great messages and all that but brothers and sisters we are preaching discipleship.

It's a narrow gate, it's a narrow way and I don't complain against anybody because of one verse Romans 8 28 that says no harm can come to me because God makes every single thing work for my good and that good is it makes me a little more like Christ. If somebody hurts me deliberately, it'll make me more like Christ. It's not the action, it's the reaction that shows whether you're a Christian or not.

We face so many actions in the world around us but our reaction shows whether we got something from this new covenant message. Your reaction to the way your wife speaks to you or treats you at home or the way your husband speaks to you or treats you at home shows whether you find the narrow way. You heard about it, you understood it.

That's what the Lord showed to me. Many people will understand it but few will find it and then the next verse Matthew 7 15 but beware of false prophets. Now see the context in which the first time Jesus warns about false prophets in the new testament.

See the context. The false prophets are those who say many will find it. You can identify a false prophet by somebody who says many.

Jesus said few will find it. Ah he didn't know. We are, we've got television, we've got so many methods now.

Many are finding them this way to life. Ah Jesus was ignorant. He was 2,000 years ago.

He didn't know what all methods we have to reach people in these days. It's like one great television preacher whom you all know about. Asked, somebody asked him, how is it Jesus didn't ask for money like you ask people, poor people, for money? He said Jesus didn't have a television program like I have.

He didn't have as big a ministry as I have. He was just working in Nazareth small little speaking to few people. I've got a worldwide ministry.

You think such people are servants of God? They are servants of the devil and I have no hesitation in saying that and you can quote me. You can say brother Zack said it. They may take me to court for saying things.

I've already been taken to court for saying things. They can take me again but I should speak the truth of God. One day they may kill me for it.

That's fine. Beware of false prophets who will tell you that the way is wide and there'll be thousands of people who are going to find it. India is going to get converted.

America is going to get converted. You know all these people who say America must repent. How about saying that Afghanistan must repent? Nobody thinks of that.

Why is that? They say America is a Christian country. Christian country? Tell me another story. There is no Christian country in the face of the earth.

Not India, not America, not Afghanistan. You cannot ask a country to repent. The last message in the Bible is the churches must repent.

Not Laodicea but the church in Laodicea. Not Ephesus but the church in Ephesus and the elder brother in Ephesus. That's the guy who's got to repent.

Forget Ephesus and forget Laodicea and forget Afghanistan and forget America and forget India. The church in India has got to repent. That's the last message of repentance found in the Bible.

But people don't read the Bible slowly. They don't read it carefully. They all got all that bright ideas and they're telling countries to repent.

They're living in the days of Jonah. It's the old covenant. Nineveh must repent.

Brother do you know that Jesus died? Do you know the Holy Spirit has come? Do you know there's a new covenant since the day of Pentecost? You haven't heard about that? Well let me tell you. These are not the days of Nineveh. That's why I have some question about these songs which says these are the days of Moses and these are the days of David and these are the days of Ezekiel.

I say why don't you end with saying those were the days of David. Those were the days of Ezekiel but these are the days of Jesus and these are the days of the Holy Spirit. So many of our songs are wrong and when we sing wrong songs our theology becomes wrong and fellow falls into adultery and says these are the days of David.

It's okay then. You'll still be a man after God's own heart. Did Jesus fall into adultery? That's my question.

I know one preacher who was depressed and who said but even Elijah was depressed. I said well if Elijah is the author and finisher of your faith I suppose you've got to be depressed. But Jesus is the author and finisher of my faith and I don't believe I'll ever get depressed or discouraged in my whole life.

I don't believe I'll ever have a bad mood at any time in my life. Not because I can keep myself but I believe in a Jesus who can keep me. I don't believe these false prophets who say oh Jesus is not powerful.

He can't keep you. You will be like all other men depressed, defeated. You will yell at your wife till your dying day and it'll never go well with you.

Your children will be wayward just like everybody else's children. It will not be any better with you and I say you're a liar Satan. Jesus is almighty.

He defeated you on the cross. You're not going to be able to touch my wife. Dear brothers and sisters it's a narrow way.

Few will find it. You know that even in CFC, Bangalore, I've had to tell people in my church where I've preached for 35 years. Young sisters please do not follow the worldliness that you see in other young

sisters in CFC.

My loyalty is not to CFC. My loyalty is to Jesus Christ and the worldliness creeps into some young sisters in CFC. I tell the other ones don't follow them.

I don't name anybody. That's not my business. If your young daughter 13 years old says why can't you be like that young girl? You say well I don't want you to be like that young girl.

Don't think that everybody in CFC is so holy. They are not. Don't think that every brother in CFC is wholehearted.

They are not and I'll tell you they are not but I thank God there are some who are wholehearted. I praise God for them. Young wholehearted brothers and sisters follow them.

Who would you like to follow Demas or Paul? I follow Paul. Isaiah prophesied. Balaam prophesied but if you wanted advice to whom would you go Isaiah or Balaam? I know who I'd go to just because a man can prophesy like Balaam and he spoke the truth in Numbers 23 and 24.

You read that he spoke about the coming of Jesus. Do you know you know that Balaam prophesied about the coming of Jesus Christ? I don't go to him for consultation. No.

The way is narrow and few there be that find it and so if you are wise you look around and see for those who are following Jesus. Follow them. Go to them for counsel.

Follow the example of godly young men and women. If you want to be wholehearted don't judge those others. You are not their judge.

God is their judge. I tell you even I don't judge them. I see worldliness somewhere but I don't judge them and pray for them.

I don't judge them. I believe prayer is more powerful than all the advice I can give. Of course I give advice but I don't pester people with advice.

I give advice and then I pray. God change them. I'm not going to pester them and pester them and pester them.

They'll change to please me and it'll be a dead work. So the way is narrow and few there be that find it. So I'm not surprised when only few find it.

Few find it in Bangalore and few find it in CFC and few find it in all our churches. Few elders find it. I'm not surprised at that because I'm not a false prophet.

I believe what Jesus said. There are very there are many who understand it and there are many elders who preach it but haven't found it themselves and you can see by the fact they get offended when they are corrected. If a person gets offended when he is corrected, listen to me, he is on the broad way that leads to destruction.

I don't have the slightest doubt in my mind about it. If you're the type of person who gets offended when you're corrected, my brother, sister, you are believe it or not on the broad way to destruction just like those idol worshipers who worship so many idols just like those businessmen who have no time for God and live

for money. You are on the same way and your responsibility is more because you take the name of Jesus Christ.

You know what you need to do? Six letters R-E-P-E-N-T. Repent. Repent means turn around, find the narrow way that leads to life.

I give you my word on the narrow way you will not get offended. Like the psalmist said, let the righteous smite me. It'll be like anointing oil on my head.

Can you say that? Let the righteous smite me. It'll be like anointing oil on my head. I thank God for some gems, absolute gems.

I can think of at least a couple of brothers immediately in CFC whom I've corrected so many times. Never once were they offended. Never once.

They're not great preachers but I see a godliness there. I don't love to correct people. I never love to correct my children but these prophets when they came up in the old testament, they were always correcting nations, leading them to holiness, just showing them what was good for them.

Very few turned. You know we had a drama once in CFC where we put the books of Kings and Chronicles and Daniel and all together and we saw the timeline and discovered that Daniel and his three friends who were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, more well known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, this Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Daniel were young men maybe 17-18 years old and they were in Jerusalem when Jeremiah was preaching. So definitely they heard Jeremiah and I can believe that they sat with Jeremiah and heard many things that he had to say.

So for the sake of the young people we did a little drama to show them how these four young people listened to Jeremiah and a lot of others heard but they listened and when they went to Babylon three of them didn't have much courage but Daniel was bold and because he stood the other three joined them and then Jeremiah himself wasn't there but they could stand for the Lord. Hundreds heard Jeremiah. The three four found it and who do you think influenced Babylon? Those people who had listened to that prophet and obeyed.

Who didn't think ah these old-fashioned ideas that Jeremiah has. They humbled themselves. They were 17 years old and Jeremiah was an old man in his 50s or something like that and they said boy this man's walked with God from the time he was 16-17.

But God called Jeremiah a young man. They had the humility to acknowledge that this is a much more godly man than me and he has got some wisdom. He's telling us if I listen to it my life and count for God and Daniel took it seriously that's what made him a witness and he could influence that whole generation and he grew to the age of 87 with a new kingdom coming in at the age of 87.

This young man Daniel who's been in Babylon from the age of 17 at the age of 87 he's thrown to the lions because he refuses to stop praying publicly and God honors him through different kingdoms that rule the world. But it's a narrow way. There are very few who found it in Babylon those days.

Four people. But those four influenced that nation more than anybody else. All these compromises.

It's so important to see the false prophets are those who say that many will find it and the false prophets are those who say the narrow way is very broad. They come in sheep's clothing which means sheep's clothing means that doctrines are absolutely evangelical and fundamental. That's a sheep's clothing but inside a sheep is a wolf.

What do you think the wolf is interested in? The wolf is only interested in getting something from the sheep for himself. Why does a wolf wear sheep's clothing and come inside a pole? To see what he can get from the sheep for himself. That's why I said beware of any preacher who's interested in getting something from you for himself.

Either your submission or your money. Beware of such people. A fellow sheep is not interested in getting anything from from you.

A sheep doesn't want to eat another sheep or bite its wool or any such thing. Anyone who does that is a wolf. It's so clear.

They may be having evangelical doctrine and fundamental and all that. People say, oh but brother he preaches his gospel. Oh he does, does he? But what about his attitude towards money? That's more important.

What type of gospel is he preaching if he loves money? So beware of false prophets. If you turn to the book of Jeremiah, you know, I wanted to speak on Job in our last session but I never got there. I'm comforted by one verse that I read in the book of Jude.

In Jude he says, okay dear brothers, I wanted to write to you about something but all of a sudden the Holy Spirit prompted me to say something else. So I'm comforted by that. Sometimes you want to say something and the Holy Spirit says no, not right now.

It's another time. In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord said to Jeremiah these amazing words, chapter 5, roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and look now and take note, look at the people in the open squares and see if you can find one man, if there is one person who will do justice and who seeks for the truth. I will pardon the whole city but they say as the Lord lives they take the name of Jehovah but they swear falsely.

Oh Lord, don't your eyes look for truth? You have smitten them but they did not weaken. You have consumed them but they refused to take correction. Are you in that category? You refuse to take correction.

You made your face harder than rock. They have refused to repent. I say Lord, they are foolish.

Verse 4, they don't know the way of the Lord. Okay, these are the poor people who don't know the scriptures. Let me go to the great people who know the scriptures and I'll speak to them.

They know the way of the Lord but they are also the same condition. The people who know the scriptures and the people who don't know the scriptures, they've all broken the yoke and burst the bonds. And the Lord says, why should I pardon you? Verse 7, your sons have forsaken me.

They've committed adultery and they go to the, they're lusting after their neighbor's wives. Verse 8, shall I not punish these people? The Lord says, verse 14, because you've spoken my true word. I'm making my

words like a fire in your mouth and this people will be like wood and it'll consume them.

Jeremiah was a man who the Lord said, look for one man and I'll save the whole city. You know, the Lord told Abraham when he prayed for Sodom and Gomorrah that was living in such terrible sin, if I find, you know, Abraham said, Lord, if you find 50 righteous people, will you spare Sodom? He said, sure. Then Abraham thought, maybe there are not 50.

40, 30, 20, 10, why didn't he go down to 5 and 3? Why did he stop at 10? I'll tell you. He said, I can stop at 10. Lot is there.

He's lived with me. He's seen what righteousness is. His wife is there.

That's two. His daughters, two daughters, that's four. And they're married.

I'm sure he got them married to God-fearing people, six. And in all these years he's been there, he must have got at least another four people. 10, definitely.

Lord, thank you. There wasn't even two. And the Bible does call Lot a righteous man, so I'll accept it.

Otherwise, I have serious doubts about whatever righteousness he had, but maybe according to his life, he was a man who was grieved. He was like these weak elders like Eli, who themselves wanted some godliness, but have no ability to correct things that go wrong in their church. I've met some people like that, very fine God-fearing people.

They're all wishy-washy when it comes to correcting others because they have got one big failure. They want popularity. If I correct people, I will lose my reputation for gentleness.

And I love my reputation for gentleness so much. I have built up a reputation for gentleness. Whenever people think of my name, they think, oh brother so-and-so, he's such a gentle brother.

I've built that reputation over 25 years. Oh, can I lose it now by speaking hard to somebody? Do you think God will ever call such a man to be a prophet? He will just live with a reputation as a gentle brother and die with a reputation as a gentle brother and accomplish nothing for God. I don't want that.

I also like to have a reputation for a gentle brother, but my first prayer is, hallowed be thy name, not hallowed be my name. I don't mind my name. Lord Jesus, hallowed be thy name.

And if I lose my name in that process, it's okay. Keep your church pure. That's more important.

So Lot was like that. He couldn't even convert his own family. His children went astray.

His wife went astray. He was saved himself. What sort of salvation was that when he ends up committing adultery with his daughters? It's really sad.

The Lord says, if I could find 10 people, but in Jeremiah's day, it was worse. Only one. If you find one, Jeremiah, I'm not counting you.

Can you find one in these streets? And I'll spare them. There wasn't anybody. I don't know where Daniel was in those days, whether he was not wholehearted then or became wholehearted later, or whether he was a kid then, I don't know.

But there wasn't anybody at that time. You see, you need to understand. Let me show you another verse in Ezekiel chapter 14.

Ezekiel 14 and verse 13. In those days, God dealt with countries. It was proper to ask Nineveh to repent or Assyria to repent or Babylon to repent, etc.

But not today. Ezekiel 14 and 13. Son of man, if a country sins against me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out my hand against it to destroy it, bring a famine there, cut off man and beast.

But if there are three righteous men in that country, but they have to be good quality righteousness, like Noah, Daniel, and Joel. Really good quality righteousness, not people like Lot. Lot is not included.

He's got to be a man like Noah, who stood against the whole world and became a preacher of righteousness. He's got to be a man like Joel, who according to the light he had was righteous, upright, who would not look to women to lust, even in those days, and who cared for the poor and the widows and the helpless. A man like Joel, who lived according to righteousness, who brought up his family in a godly way.

That's if I can find a man like that. Old men, Noah, 600 years old, faithful. Joel, I don't know, maybe 200, 250 years old, righteous, and the other two were dead.

Daniel was alive when Ezekiel was preaching. Ezekiel was older than Daniel. Ezekiel was 30 years old, and God says, you know, I can think of one man right now on the earth, whom I can classify with those dead saints like Noah and Joel, Daniel.

Lord, Ezekiel says, if I mention Noah, Joel, and Daniel, don't you think it'll puff up Daniel and make him think, oh, no, he's a humble young brother. It will not puff him up. Even though he's alive, name him Ezekiel.

I was so challenged when I read it. For God to name a young 25-year-old man, put him in the same category as Noah and Joel, and that it doesn't swell Daniel's head, because Ezekiel was prophesying in Daniel, and Daniel heard this message, and it doesn't swell his head. He remains the same humble man 70 years later, faithful to God.

I said, Lord, please make me like that, that no matter what people say about me, that whether they call me a devil or a prophet, it won't make a slight difference in my heart, because it's your opinion alone that matters. But if there were three people like that, he'll save himself. That's all.

Noah, in this time, that time he saved his wife and children, but here, he won't even be able to save his wife and children. Sorry. He'll be able to save himself.

Joel, in that time, he blessed his wife and children, but now he'll be only able to save himself. And Daniel, he's not married, he'll save himself. Just three people.

Do you know that they will save themselves by their righteousness? Do you know how much God values his righteousness? In Sodom, God said, if there are 10 righteous people, not compromises, there can be a thousand compromises, thousand people sitting in mega churches. No. Ten righteous people are like that burning bush, totally on fire.

And here, three men who are like burning bushes, totally on fire. We don't need three thousand. And he told Jeremiah, if you find one, you know God has always looked for a man.

Always. He told Ezekiel later on in chapter 20, 22, sorry. I want you to see the heart of God here.

I want you to see the heart of God, my brothers and sisters. Say, Lord, help me to see your heart in Ezekiel 22. And let me paraphrase these words.

Verse 24. Ezekiel, tell the church, you're a church that is not cleansed. There is a conspiracy among your elders and your preachers.

They have devoured lives. Authoritarian elders who are not humble servants, devouring people, getting up and preaching for one hour and boring people to death, imagining themselves to be prophets when they could have blessed the church by shutting their mouth. They've taken the treasure and precious things from people.

They collect money. Maybe you don't collect money. Maybe you collect honor.

Some of us elders are boasting that we don't collect money from people like all these television evangelists. Brother, do you collect honor? It's just as bad. Do you collect submission from people? You've got to listen to me.

There's no difference between you and those television evangelists. They collect money. You collect submission and honor.

No, we have no right. The Lord must lord it over people. We have no right to lord it over anyone.

Whenever I appoint elders in any church, I tell them, you are a toilet cleaner. Toilet cleaner. People will make a mess in your church.

You've got to put your hands in there and clean it up. Somebody's got to clean up that mess. Elders are appointed for that.

If you want to sit on a big throne like a king, brother, this is not the church for you. I have no responsibility for you. If you're willing to be a toilet cleaner, be it.

I've cleaned lots of toilets, physically and spiritually. The spiritual ones are more than the physical ones I've cleaned. You know, some little babies go and mess up a toilet and don't flush it and the thing gets blocked.

What are you going to do? You're going to ask the daddies, what are you going to do? Just shout at the children. The more you shout at the children, the thing gets flooded. The sensible thing to do is, are you going to ask your children to clean it? They'll make a bigger mess.

The dad has to put on some gloves and put his hand in and clean it. That is what we have had to do in many churches. That is the function of an elder brother.

When other people fight or quarrel with their babies, they'll mess up the floor. Of course, babies will mess up the floor all over. You know, in our villages, nobody wears diapers.

They mess up the floor everywhere. You've got to clean it up. The mothers, there's no use just shouting at the babies.

They'll do it. The more you shout at them, the more they'll do it. You've got to clean it up.

You want to be an elder like that? Welcome to the brotherhood of elders. But if you want to be some king, collect honor, brother. This is not the church for you.

There are a hundred other churches. You've got enough knowledge here. You've lived in CFC long enough to accumulate knowledge.

They'll make you the number one preacher in those churches with all your information. You can't be an elder here. Sorry.

They have not taught people, in the middle of verse 26, they have not made distinction between the holy and the unclean. They have not taught the people to differentiate between the unclean and the clean. How can you teach people to differentiate if you haven't cleansed it yourself? No wonder your church is not like a burning bush.

Her rulers are like wolves, verse 27, tearing the prey, destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain, the gain of money or the gain of honor or the gain of submission to my authority. And what do these elders do? They smear whitewash on this broken wall. They see false visions and say, the Lord spoke to me, divining lies and says, thus says the Lord.

They get up up there in the pulpits saying, thus says the Lord, and the Lord has not spoken to them at all. And the result is the people do all types of wrong, and they especially wrong the poor and the needy. Oh, I feel sorry for the poor people in many churches who are being fooled by pastors today saying, give to God, and God will give you a big house and a big car.

Where does that money go? It goes into the preacher's pocket. It doesn't go to God at all. And in the midst of all this compromise and corruption in Christendom, it's almost like a description of today's Christendom, the Lord says in the midst of all this, verse 30, I searched for one single man.

I searched for a man who did not want a reputation for gentleness, who did not want to preach a soft message that would say, oh, he's such a saint. You should listen to him, brother. He's such a saint when he speaks.

He speaks so gently. He doesn't hurt anybody. He won't even hurt the devil.

He's just so gentle and nice. I searched for a man. I believe the Lord is searching churches in Babylon.

Ezekiel was the only prophet who preached in Babylon. And in Babylon, the Lord says, I searched for a man. Today, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon men and women, Acts 2, 17.

So today, the Lord will also say, I searched for a woman as well. Those days he didn't, but we're living in post-Pentecost days that I'll pour out my spirit on my sons and daughters, your sisters. I often tell young sisters, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was probably not more than 19 years old.

People got engaged pretty early in those days, like in many villages. If you were a 19-year-old girl in the land of Israel, is what I tell young sisters, would God have chosen you to be the mother of Jesus? Mary is

a great example. I'm not a Roman Catholic, but I'm not an anti-Roman Catholic, such an anti-Roman Catholic that I can't find anything good in Mary.

I think Mary was one of the most godly young women, a fantastic example for young people. Look at the way when 20 years old or 19 years old, delivering a baby in the midst of cows and donkeys and rats running around and mosquitoes and cockroaches and cow dung and everything filthy. What would the average 19-year-old young wife say today to her husband? You couldn't even plan ahead to get a room for me? Didn't you know that I was going? Nine months ago you knew I was expecting.

You could have started early on our journey. Why last minute you come, there are no rooms left here? And poor Joseph, like many husbands, they had to say what to say to this cantankerous woman. And you think God would have chosen a woman like that, to be the mother of Jesus, with all that yelling and screaming going, now I'm pushing, the child is coming out.

And she hears all this yelling and screaming. No, sir. God would never have chosen a woman like that.

God chose a woman who accepted her circumstances. I'm a nobody. I'm a nobody.

And if God Almighty chooses to allow me to have no place, she didn't even have the Holy Spirit like we have. She hadn't seen Calvary yet. We've seen much more.

If God Almighty allows me to give birth to his son in a stable, that's his sovereign choice. He planned it millions of years ago. And he chose me, unworthy person that I am, to deliver his son.

He has determined where it should be done. I shall bow and accept his way. Be a sister like that.

Be a sister like that. Follow her example. I searched for a man.

I searched for a woman. I believe God searched in Israel for a woman through whom he could send Jesus. And he found Mary.

Thank God. In that generation, he found one girl at least. Today, he's searching for a man or a woman who will stand against this corruption, who seek nothing for themselves, who don't want money, don't want honor, who are willing to be toilet cleaners to the rest of their lives.

No complaint against anybody, whether they get hit, thrown, whatever it is, they say that's fine. You're to serve and serve and serve and serve. And after you serve for 50 years, you continue to serve and serve and serve and serve.

And you don't expect any thanks or appreciation or nothing because you're doing it as unto the Lord. I searched for a man who will stand in the gap. You know, there's a gap today.

It's a pretty wide gap between what the Bible teaches and what the church today is, what Christendom is and what the Bible teaches, the way Jesus did and the apostles did the work and the way Christians are doing the work. There's a huge gap. And the Lord is looking for a man or a woman who will stand in this gap and say, that's not the way to do God's work.

If you believe that's the way to do God's work, be absolutely honest and throw away the Bible and say, this is outdated. This is old fashioned. God did not know the circumstances of the 21st century.

God did not know that we would need more. We would need to get money from poor people and force them to pay their tithes. He didn't know all that because he didn't know that we're going to have TV programs to spread his word and all these things.

He did not know that. So be honest and throw this God of the Bible out into the trash can. Then do your work, but don't call it God's work and don't say this is New Testament work.

It is. Read the New Testament. Where do you see these type of churches which have got a CEO on top? It's like a Pope.

They call them by different names. You know, General Superintendent or Pope is the same thing, whether it's a Pentecostal church or a Calvin church, and it's a pyramid elected to come to the top. Where do you see? Do you see any apostle elected in the New Testament? Do you see any church with a structure like that? Every church was a local church.

Paul was not the CEO of 50 churches. No, he was a father. And there was a fellowship between them.

There were no independent churches here and there answerable to nobody. That's also not found in the New Testament. This pyramid structure is not found in the New Testament and independent churches are not part of the New Testament.

What do we find in the New Testament? We find apostles planting churches, appointing elders, and taking responsibility for those elders and guiding them and leading them and correcting them and bearing with them and carrying them in labor till Christ is formed in them. That's what you see in the New Testament. I looked and looked and looked to see such churches.

Where do you find them? There's a big gap. There's a gap in India. There's a gap in America.

There's a gap in Australia. There's a gap in every part of the world. And who's going to stand in the gap and say, we're going to stand for God's highest standards? People said, brother, if you stand for all that, we'll have very few people.

So what? God needs only two or three. Jesus had said something like this, wherever 2,000 or 3,000 people gather in my name, there am I in the midst of them. I wouldn't even be here today.

I said, the Lord cannot be here. He said, where 2,000 or 3,000 minimum, I'll be in the midst. Thank God, He said, where? Two or three.

Two is the minimum. That's all He needs. That's fine.

I'll be in the midst. The most important thing is to have Him in our midst. I look for a man who will stand in the gap and hold people to the highest standards of God's word.

And if some people get offended and go, we say, goodbye, brother. God bless you. Go your way.

There are 1,000 other churches you can go and join. But we're standing for God's highest standards. Are you doing that in your local church? You want to be a man or a woman who stands in the gap? You want to be a man or woman whom God said, Lord, I want to be that.

I'll tell you, don't say that too quickly, because He will search every nook and corner of your life and tell you to get rid of this and get rid of that and even certain legitimate lawful things that other Christians can do, He won't allow you to do. Many years ago, we published an article written by someone called Others May But You Cannot. You remember that article? God may permit other Christians to do a lot of things, but He won't allow you to do it, because you're a man standing in the gap.

You're not like those wandering Christians. You're a man standing in the gap, and He holds you to a much higher standard. He will not allow you to behave like them or speak like them or have the attitude of money that other believers have.

He'll allow other believers to do all types of things, but not you, because you are His representative, and you are to be like Jesus in your behavior, in your speech, in your attitude, in your... In other words, we can say in today's terms, I searched for a man who wants desperately to be like my son Jesus, and who's not interested in getting a reputation for gentleness. What reputation did Jesus get for gentleness when He took a whip and chased all those fellows making money out of the temple? You know the best part of it? I'll close with this. It's a very beautiful story.

Read the Bible slowly, John chapter 2. The Lord tells His disciples when He sees all these money changers, He saw it, and He told the disciples, go and get some string, some thread. They wonder, why does the Lord want thread, string? They see Him sit in a corner, and it says He made the rope. Twisted, twisted.

So what is He making a rope for? The disciples say, hey, Peter, John, help me to make this rope. Okay, tie it up. Is it strong now? Good.

Okay, now He goes and whips all the sheep and turns the cables, and He didn't go and say, you gentlemen, please move your cables out. You know, you shouldn't be doing all this here. And sheep, you know, this is not the place, dear friends.

I know, I love you folks. I love you folks, but let's try and do things a little better. That's another Jesus.

He just kicked them all out. And now here's the best part. When all the disciples thought, ah, He lost His temper.

He did not call them and say, listen, fellows, I didn't actually lose my temper. I want to explain this all to you. That's the best part of it.

I love that. He never explained. Did Matthew think I lost my temper? Let him think so.

Did Peter think that at last Jesus lost His temper? Let him think so. I couldn't care less for Peter's opinion. I did what God told me to do.

I searched for a man like that, a woman like that, who couldn't care less for anybody's opinion. Let's be like that, brothers and sisters, and we'll have a lot of burning bushes in India soon. He's looking for such people.

Heavenly Father, I believe with all my heart that you're looking for people in every land who do not seek their own reputation for holiness or their own reputation for gentleness or any such thing, but are only praying, hallowed be Thy name. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. I pray that you will find

in our midst young men, young women like that in the coming generation.

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