

# God Protects Us Against Our Enemies

by Zac Poonen

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*God treats us as we treat others, and we should strive to be like fathers, not teachers, by being patient, understanding, and loving.*

**Duration:** 1:03:18

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 2:30, Esther 4:14, Proverbs 22:1, Matthew 10:25, Acts 7:60

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Persevering Through Trials"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of standing firm in faith and integrity, even in the face of opposition and challenges. Drawing insights from the story of Esther in the Bible, it highlights the need to trust in God's timing and providence, showing how God can turn situations around for those who honor Him. The message encourages believers to be willing to endure hardships, persecution, and even loss for the sake of their faith, knowing that God ultimately honors those who stand for Him.

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## Transcript

If we can understand certain principles of how God deals with man, it will help us greatly in our life. I want to show you a verse in Psalm 18 verse 25. Psalm 18 verse 25 we read about God.

With the kind you show yourself kind. With the blameless you show yourself blameless, 26. With the pure you show yourself pure.

And with the crooked you show yourself astute. So what do we learn from that? You know, when we are kind it's to other people. When we deal crookedly it's with other people.

In simple words, God treats you in the way you treat other people. It's basically what those words mean. We are below God and there are people on earth who are below you.

Socially, economically. The way you treat people below you is the way God will treat you. It's a lesson I learned years ago in my life.

And I learned thereafter to treat any servants I had in my home. How? The way I wanted God to treat me. I said I'll always be good and kind and generous to the servants in my home.

Not miserly and tight-fisted. If you are, don't be surprised if God is miserly and tight-fisted with you. With a miserly and tight-fisted God will show himself miserly and tight-fisted.

You are so exact in what you demand from your servants. God will be very exact in demanding from you. God wants us to obey him.

We want our servants to obey us. But there is a kindness in God that I want to experience. The way you treat people junior to you, inferior to you, who you think are inferior or lower, God will treat you like that.

Please remember this. It will make a tremendous difference in your life. Now I believe that we should treat people kindly even if we don't want anything from God.

But that is a mature level. That I want to be kind to other people, not because God is going to be kind to me. That's like doing business with God.

It's a very low level to start with, but because we are all basically business-minded, you don't realize it, we are all business-minded, I will give something if I can get something in return. So, okay, God, will you be kind to me if I am kind to my servant? Okay, from tomorrow onwards I am going to be kind to you. It's a business transaction.

But start there. Till you come to the higher level where you say, Lord, I will be kind to people and I expect nothing from you. That's the highest level to be in because that's the nature of Jesus.

Jesus was kind and merciful to people, not because he wanted anything from his father. It's just his nature. I mean, a cat doesn't expect a reward for keeping itself pure.

No. It's just his nature. I mean, if a pig says, okay, I'll keep myself pure from now on, you better give it a reward because that's not his nature.

But if a cat is pure and licks itself clean, that's just his nature. That's the highest level. But we all start as pigs.

If God says, I'll reward you, I say, okay, I'm a pig but I'll keep myself clean. But that's not the best. The best is to get divine nature where you are kind, expecting nothing in return.

So that's something we must remember. I'm just trying to teach you some principles which will stand you in good stead as you go away from here. Here's another thing.

Turn with me to Job chapter 36. Even though this is something that Elihu said, it was the truth. At the end of chapter 42, the middle of chapter 42, God said what the other three preachers said was wrong, but he never said what Elihu said was wrong.

Notice that. There were four preachers that preached to Job. And in Job 42, God said the other three spoke wrong about me, but not Elihu.

Elihu spoke what was right. And one of the right things that Elihu said about God was in Job 36 in verse 5. God is mighty, or we can say almighty, but he does not despise anybody. We despise people who don't do things the way we think they should do it.

We have a certain standard. And in arrogance, we think that standard is perfect. And that person may be doing something which is not sin, but it's not up to our standard of civilization or culture, and we despise him.

We may not say it, but we despise him. And you know, cultures view things differently. For example, you can look at an uncultured man who sits at your dining table and picks his nose, and you say, what's he doing? But he looks at this very cultured westerner who takes a hanky and blows his nose at the table with making such a loud noise, everybody hears it.

And the uncultured man says, what type of culture is that, blowing your nose so loudly in the presence of everybody? I'm just sitting quietly here, picking my nose, not disturbing anybody. Nobody's disturbed. You're not disturbed if somebody sits there and picks his nose.

But the whole room is disturbed when you blow your nose so loud. But western culture teaches that it's okay to blow your nose loudly and announce to the whole room, I'm blowing my nose, I've got a cold, fellas. But this fellow announces nothing, he just quietly sits there and picks his nose.

Which do you think is more disturbing to other people? This is the stupidity of thinking that your culture is better than other cultures. I'm just giving you one example. Do you want me to spend the whole meeting giving you examples? No, I don't have time for that.

But I've seen plenty in the world where people despise others. They don't say it, they're too cultured to say it. But they don't see how they themselves are crude to the other person.

You think that other person is crude and very often you'll discover, like the example I gave you, that he's not disturbing anybody. You are. But you think that's culture.

Because your civilization, your culture taught you that. Like I told you earlier about eating with your hands or eating with a fork and a spoon. If you find there's something you despise in another, it's because you think you're superior.

God is way above you. He doesn't despise anybody. A second principle.

God treats you as you treat other people. God doesn't despise anybody. When you despise somebody, God's going to despise you.

Because you're despising somebody, God will treat you like the way you treat other people. You can't blame him. Because you see, he doesn't do the way I think he should do it.

God says, you're not doing the way I think you should do it either. We can look at it like two extremes. God is here on one side despising nobody.

The devil is on the other side despising everybody. All of us are somewhere in between. I'm sure you don't despise everybody.

There's one person you definitely don't despise, right? Who's that? Yourself. And then there are a few others whom you like very much whom you don't despise. So you're not at the level of the devil.

You're a little more this side. I'm trying to encourage you to move more and more and more and more towards God who despises nobody. I hope you'll get a little closer to there next year.

I hope you'll get a little closer to that tomorrow. I have sought with all my heart to despise nobody. For their lack of culture, lack of education, lack of spirituality, lack of understanding the word of God.

I know times when I've tried to, in the early days when I used to work with people more individually, trying to get somebody to understand the truth of the New Covenant and this and getting a bit fed up. How long am I going to teach this guy to know the truth? And the Lord whispers in my ear, How long did it take you? And I'm immediately humbled. Lord, I'm sorry.

It took me more than 16 years after I was born again to come to the truth of the New Covenant. I can be patient. Sure.

I will not despise anyone even if they are slow in grasping something. You know, that's what I always say. It's the difference between a father and a teacher.

I told you that the one reason Jesus sat when he spoke was because he was not a teacher. He was a father. The Old Testament prophets stood because they were proclaiming.

Jesus sat because he said, This is a family. No father stands at the dining table. Teachers stand in the school.

I'm not saying the physical position is important. Even if you stand in the pulpit, I often stand in the pulpit. But when I stand in the pulpit, I want to have the spirit of a father, not the spirit of a teacher.

Be careful because we naturally tend towards becoming teachers, not fathers. And teachers will shame others. This is the example I've often used.

Here's a student, for example, who is doing poorly in mathematics. And there's something the teacher has been explaining, explaining, explaining. Everybody in the class has understood except one ten-year-old boy.

Maybe this is third, fourth standard. And he says, Teacher, I don't understand yet. And the teacher gets fed up.

How long am I going to sit here trying to teach you? You're keeping the class backward. Get out of this class. Go and join some other school.

I don't want you to come here again. That's a teacher because he's interested in the advancement of the class. He gets a salary.

And he wants to get good results. He doesn't want anybody to fail and get him a bad name. That poor boy goes crying home.

And his father says, Son, what happened? He says, Daddy, I can't understand this. I'm not being stubborn. I just can't understand.

I'm not so intelligent what to do. Daddy says, What is it, son? And he explains the problem. And he sits with him for one hour.

Personal tuition. And the child says, Daddy, I still can't understand. I'm sorry.

Sorry to waste your time. And the father says, No worries, son. Tomorrow is another day.

We'll start again tomorrow. Tomorrow comes. The child sits with him one hour.

Daddy, please be patient with me. I still can't understand. Son, I will not give up.

If it takes me a whole year, I'm going to learn this. And he sits with him. And a few days, one day, the boy's eyes brighten.

I got it. And the dad is thrilled. And the boy is thrilled.

This is a father. You see the difference between a father and a teacher? We don't want teachers in our churches. We want fathers.

And mothers. We want you to be like that to your own children. Because they did something wrong for the thousandth time.

Tell them, even if you do it wrong ten thousand times, My dear girl, my dear son, I love you. I'm your father, I'm your mother. I'm determined that you will learn to do it right.

God's appointed me as your parent to make you perfect before you leave my house and set up your own home. Do you have that attitude or do you just criticize and say, I don't know, I'm fed up with my son, how long I've been trying, how long I'm fed up with my daughter. She doesn't listen to me.

I remember one mother once came to me. She used to be with us. The family has left CFC now.

It is not in Bangalore, another place. Came to me and said, Brother Zach, please pray for this son of mine. He doesn't study properly.

He doesn't get good marks. Imagine humiliating a son like that in the presence of someone whom he respects and whose opinion he values. I prayed for the mother.

I never prayed for that son. I believe the problem very often is with parents. Sure, we discourage our children so much because if they lack intelligence, brother, sister, it's because you lacked intelligence.

They got your genes. Don't blame them. Do you know Pandit Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India? Son, when he was your age, he came first in the class.

The son said, Dad, when he was your age, he was Prime Minister of India. That was a smart son. So this business of comparing your children with other great people or other children, it's all foolish.

Don't despise anybody. Don't despise your children. Love them.

Let them know that you love them. I've often told the story of a young brother. Not a young brother.

He was a young man who used to come to CFC. He was not converted and he was often falling into a drink with bad friends. This was many, many years ago.

He used to always come to me and say, Brother Zak, I've fallen again. My friends led me to Bangalore and went to some other place. I didn't know when I'd see him again.

This is the last word I spoke to him. I said, Son, one day when you hit rock bottom and you've really messed up your life, I've tried my best to turn you, turn you, but you're still struggling. One day when you hit rock bottom, remember two things.

Remember that God still loves you and remember that I love you too. And the doors of my house are always open to you no matter what condition you're in. Welcome.

We are here to help you. I saw him years later, born again, converted, happily married. I praise the Lord.

Encouragement does wonders where criticism and despising accomplishes nothing. That's why Paul said, You can have 10,000 teachers, 1 Corinthians in Chapter 4. 1 Corinthians in Chapter 4 It's not only for elders, but all of us are elders to somebody else. Aren't you that? I remember once in one meeting in CFC, I said, many of you have a great longing to be elders.

Okay, I hereby appoint all of you as elders to all those who are younger to you. Happy? Sisters also. Elders to all those who are younger to you.

Be an example to them. Be a father to them. He says, verse 14, I'm not writing these things to shame you.

That is a teacher who shames, but to admonish you as my beloved children. You can have 10,000 teachers, but you don't have many fathers. I'm your father through the gospel.

Paul was not a teacher. He was a father who taught better than the teachers. The teachers worked for a salary.

Fathers don't get any salary. Fathers earn the salary to spend on their children. Yeah, later on in 2 Corinthians 12, 14, he says, fathers lay up for the children.

Children don't pay their fathers. You pay a teacher. Every pastor who works for salary is a teacher.

Paid worker. Father doesn't get salary. Father's got a heart to serve and serve and serve.

If he's in need, I'm sure his children will take care of him. That's another thing. But he doesn't work for that.

He says, you can have 10,000 teachers, but you don't have many fathers, which teaches me one thing. You can do the maths on that. One father is better than 10,000 teachers.

10,000 people who got the spirit of a teacher, one father is better than all of them. I would rather have one father than 10,000 elders who are teachers. I would rather have a family, in a family, a father and mother who got the spirit of a father than the spirit of a teacher towards their children.

They'll accomplish 10,000 times more than the spirit of despising and criticizing and teaching. I hope we will learn that. And God will treat you the way you treat others.

You find sometimes God is hard on you? Ask yourself whether you're hard on somebody else. Whether you jump on somebody who did something wrong, you told them to do it, and they didn't do it right? And you jump on them and punish them? I'm not saying that we should encourage inefficiency. I remember many years ago in a conference here, when they were serving food.

This was in the early days when we were in the other building and I felt the way the food was being served was not very efficient. It was taking a long time to arrange this in a better efficient way and the Lord said, keep your mouth shut. If you go and tell them to change the method now, you'll confuse everything and out of their respect for you they'll change it and it'll be worse.

Keep your mouth shut. After the conference is over, you have a review meeting, then tell them to do it better next time. I say, Lord, what wisdom.

It's good to listen to God. Sometimes we feel like we should leave it and wait till do it, say it a little later, not immediately correct him. I'll give you an example.

When Peter was walking on the water, he turned and looked at the waves and he began to sink. What was his problem? Lack of faith. What did Jesus do? He did not rebuke him for his lack of faith first.

He first held him, made him stand, then rebuked him for the lack of faith. You solve the problem first, then say. Supposing your kid has done something and messed it up.

Don't start off by saying, I told you you should not do it like this. No, no, no. You fix it, sort the problem, then tell him, hey listen, remember I told you this is not the way to do it.

But our tendency is to first say, I told you not to do it. I told you a thousand times. We have never said it a thousand times.

We ourselves are exaggerating when we say that. This is the craziness of some things we say. You know, if we are a little wiser, I believe we will not drive our children away so much from the Lord and from the church.

We want people who can encourage like a father. Encourage. Especially prodigal children.

I've been to some homes where out of three or four children three are wholehearted and fine and one is a bit wayward. And the parents introduce me to the children. And I always say, every single time, I have more hope for this one you call wayward than for all the others.

I have great hope for prodigal children. I've seen through the years that very often it's these prodigal children who rise to great heights. Because they don't have high thoughts about themselves.

They come home. They know they made a mess of their life. They know even the servants in the home know this boy made a mess of his life.

He's got nothing to boast about. But the other elder son in the story, he's the one I fear. Because he's never got a bad reputation.

He's always been the good boy in the house. You know what that prodigal son story is? I call it the story of two sons. The story goes like this.

Two sentences. Two sentences. In the beginning of the story, the elder son is inside the house, and the younger son, spoiled boy, is outside the house.

End of the story, the younger son is inside the house, and the elder son, the good boy, is outside the house. Remember that. The one who thinks he's so good.

Do you despise some of your younger brothers because they are prodigals? Or some of your younger sisters because they have mercy on you? They will repent one day and turn out all right. When you despise, suppose you heard the message of victory over sin. I've used this example also before.

And you got victory over sin. And your wife, maybe she's unconverted or she doesn't have life. And one day there's a dispute and she yells at you and screams at you and you sit there patiently or not opening your mouth because you got victory.

When the storm is over, you just think of yourself, Lord, I thank you that I'm not like my wife. I thank you that I have victory. I tell you, there's more hope for your wife.

Because Jesus told a story about a man who prayed like that. You remember that story? Lord, I thank you that I'm not like other men or like this wife of mine standing there. Well, not wife, tax collector.

It doesn't matter who that is. You can look at somebody and say, I'm not like that. It can be in your church.

Lord, I thank you that my church is not like other churches. Look at that church down there. Or you can compare yourself with other CFC churches.

Lord, I thank you that our CFC church is so good compared to that CFC church over there. You be careful, brother. It may be true, but if you have that spirit, you're a Pharisee.

We have pride in our humility. Like the story of the Sunday school teacher who told the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. And at the end of the story, she said, you know, the Pharisee said, I thank God we're not like the tax collector.

Children, thank God we are not like the Pharisee. You see the Phariseeism there? You don't see it. It's there.

The moment you say, I thank God I'm not like that person who's defeated. I'm not like that person who's as light as me. I thank God I'm not like that other church that the sisters there don't wail their heads.

They wear ornaments. You despise them. Or those brothers in that church, they are pretty worldly.

They listen to rock music once in a while. My brother, sister, you are on dangerous ground. Because I'll tell you something, spiritual pride is worse than rock music.

It's a million times worse than not wailing the head because it's spiritual pride and it's so close to us. Do you have faith? The Bible says have it before God. Not for you to compare yourself with anybody else.

There's a verse which I've always paraphrased like this. Those who compare themselves with others are spiritual idiots. 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 12.

Very important verse. Those who compare themselves with others are spiritual idiots. You get it? We are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of these others who praise themselves.

But when they measure themselves among themselves, I got 60%, you got 55%. They compare themselves with themselves. They are without understanding.

That means they are spiritual idiots. The way to be a spiritual idiot, compare yourself with other people and be happy that you are better than them. Beware of that.

God does not despise anybody. That's one thing very important for us to understand. Then I want to say another thing which relates to the times in which we live.

The Bible says all men will hate you for my name's sake. Jesus said that in the last days. In the book of Revelation, the devil is very angry because he knows he's got a very short time.

That's a verse in the book of Revelation. Read particularly chapters 11 to 13 and you'll see about that passage. The devil knows he's got a very short time and he's very angry.

I believe right now the devil knows because he knows prophecy better than God's people. He knows he's got a very short time before his reign of thousands of years. He's ruled over man for 6000 years and the demons who are in this room listening, they know it.

Demons come to the meetings by the way. Don't boast in the fact that you go to every meeting. Demons go to more meetings than you do.

Spirituality does not depend on how many meetings you go to. He knows his time is short and therefore it says his anger is great. That's what it says in Revelation.

He knows his time is short and so he's angry with those who have the testimony of Jesus and keep his commandments. Those are the people he's angry with. So I don't have time to show you all those verses.

Read Revelation chapters 11 to 13 and you can find it for yourself. Okay. Now there is an example in the Old Testament to comfort us in this time when so many people are against us.

Maybe other Christians are against us. People of other religions have turned against Christians maybe in India. How shall we face it? There is an answer in scripture and particularly for our time in India you find the answer in the book of Esther.

The book of Esther is the only book in the Bible where the word God or Lord never comes. God is never mentioned once in that book. But you can see behind the scenes he's acting all the time.

Teaching us about a situation where like you may not God may not audibly speak to you but you find God working on your behalf. Okay. In Esther the basic story I don't have time to go through all of it.

There were a number of Jews who were a minority in the land of reigned by Ahasuerus. I think he was the king of Iran, Persia. By the way it's the only place where India is mentioned in the Bible.

Esther chapter 1 verse 1. In the days of Ahasuerus he reigned from India to Ethiopia. So it's relevant to us. And in there this ruler had a second in command like a prime minister.

The king was a ruler those days and the second in command was a man called Haman who hated these Jews or let's say Christians in our day applying it to our day. This person who ruled over India hated the Christians because he was the ruler of the country. He ruled from India.

And this second in command came up to the king one day and said, listen to this and apply it to Christians. Esther chapter 3 verse 8. This is our king. There is a certain type of people scattered and dispersed among the peoples.

There are not many, the percentage is only about 2% or so but they are scattered here and there among the people of your kingdom in India and their laws are different from those of all the other people in our land. They won't do puja. They don't obey certain commandments we have in our religion.

So it is not in the king's interest to let these people survive here. Get rid of them. You see how relevant the Bible is to our time? It's really amazing.

And if it is pleasing to the king because you have all authority over it, let it be decreed that they be destroyed. Get rid of them so that in this country we have only one religion and we have only one law everybody obeys. And I will pay you money, 10,000 talents, that's a lot of money, into the hands of those who carry on this work to finish off these people.

And the king took his signet ring and gave it to him and said go. The silver is yours, the people also. Do whatever you please.

The king didn't want to do it himself. He didn't want to get a bad name. That's very often what happens.

The man at the top tries to give the impression I'm a gracious man, I'm a nice man, you're all my people, I love all of you. But he's allowed these other fellows underneath to go and allow these things and they do it. The king knows about it but he just pretends that he doesn't know and everything is okay.

I tell you the Bible is so relevant to our time. And Haman went out and he discussed with his wife and decided okay, we're going to finish these people off. There was a man, a godly man called Mordecai, verse 4, chapter 4, verse 1. When Mordecai learned that this order had been given out, what did he do? Those days, this is the way they prayed.

They tore their clothes, put ashes and he went to the king's gate to try and plead but no one was allowed to go into the king's gate, clothed in sackcloth. And then he had a sort of a niece called Esther who had become the queen. And Esther's maidens came and told her that Mordecai, your uncle, is there in all sackcloth, verse 4, chapter 4, 4. And Esther summoned Hethak and told him to go to Mordecai and give him some clothes.

And Mordecai went out and told all that happened to him and Hethak came back in verse 9 and told him what all has happened. Esther didn't know. Esther said, I can't go to the king.

There's no way to go and change this law. And Mordecai said, verse 14, if you remain silent at this time then deliverance will come from another place. But who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this.

Now we apply that to the church. God has given us authority. We don't have physical power.

But we are the bride of Jesus Christ. We have authority to pray. There are instances we had in Bangalore in the early days, in the 1970s and 80s, when we prayed concerning things of the government, things of the Bangalore state government and the central government.

And we saw things change because we said, Lord, we've got one quality that many other churches may not have. We've got unity and we've got holiness. We emphasize holiness probably more than any other church in India.

We emphasize unity more than any other church in India. Maybe we don't do evangelism so much as others, okay, but we do discipleship more than others and we believe that evangelism must lead to discipleship. We preach holiness more than others.

We preach God's heart. And therefore, even though we are small in number, you don't care for numbers, we believe that you'll hear our prayer. And we prayed like that and some amazing things happened.

It actually happened. I'll give you one instance. I don't have time to tell all of them.

Way back in 1977, I was up in the north of India. It was about the only time I had a vision in my life. I saw one of the cabinet ministers and I saw a number of faces of Indian people and I heard a voice which said the power to free these people is in the church.

I didn't know what it meant and I didn't know why I saw this man, the face of this cabinet minister, but I knew I had to pray. And whenever I don't know what to pray about, because I'm not a politician, I'm not on this side or that side, I don't pray against any party or for any party. I don't support the Congress.

I don't support the BJP. I support Jesus Christ. So I said, Lord, I'm not on this side or that side of this party.

I don't know what to pray. So whenever I don't know what to pray, I pray in tongues. So I prayed in this unknown language God had given me concerning this man.

I said, I don't know what I'm supposed to pray. And the next day he got a heart attack. Oh, so maybe something happened.

Then I shared it with the brothers because we were a small church meeting in my house. And I said, brothers, I don't know what this is. That's why I don't know what to pray for.

But because of that, that man a few days later resigned from the parliamentary party and from his ministership. And I knew something was happening. And I said, brothers, I feel something's happening as a result of this prayer.

I'm not praying against it. I'm praying in tongues. I'm not praying in English anything.

And I said the same thing. I can't tell you what to pray for. I'm not praying against a party or for a party.

I never do that even today. And what happened? The prime minister and this minister became divided. There was a split in the governing team.

And every now and then, it would come in the papers that people are trying to unite these two, the prime minister and this senior minister. Again, the burden would come upon me to pray. When I would pray, then I knew I had to pray against this unity.

It went on like that. It was around April. And it went on like that till December, eight months later.

I think it was 1977 if I remember right. And in the end, in December, there was a man, a member of parliament who got up to try and get parliament to pass a law for the whole of India that nobody should be permitted to be converted to Christianity. And he wanted to pass it in the parliament.

And because there was this division in the party, which started in April from the time he prayed, it never could be passed. They could not get a majority in the parliament. These are facts.

And from that day, today, 38 years later, till today, that law has never been passed in this country. In a few states, they have passed it later. But in the whole country, never.

That's why we have freedom, according to the law of the land, to convert people to Christ. Does God listen to the prayers of a few people? Other people were going on processions and all that. I remember one Christian newspaper interviewed me on this at that time.

And they published saying, while other people are going on processions, protesting against this law they are trying to pass in parliament, a group in Bamilo that believes in prayer. And they have seen things happen. You know, we don't realize what power we have.

Two or three are gathered together in my name. There is authority there to bind satanic forces. We can't bind Satan.

That Jesus will do in the future. But the activities of Satan we can bind. If our hearts are clean, and we are united, that's all.

That's why I keep on stressing, keep a good conscience, and preserve fellowship. Specifically, preserve fellowship. Husband and wife, preserve fellowship.

Brothers in the church, sisters in the church, preserve fellowship. Don't fight over silly little things. Be united.

Ignore those little, little differences you have with each other. It's trivial compared to God's purpose. Look at the whole view.

Look how Christianity in India needs to glorify God's name, and you are worried about some silly little thing in your house. You fight with your husband about something more important than God's name being hallowed in India. Forget it! Even if he paid 20 rupees more, so what? Be concerned that God's name will be hallowed.

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2, we must pray for those in authority. What for? That we can restrain forces of darkness. Sometimes God allows evil powers to rule.

When Paul wrote to Timothy, pray for the kings in authority. You know who was in authority in Rome at that time? Nero. Nero still killed the Christians.

So I'm not saying God will prevent us from being persecuted or prevent us from being killed, but we will pray and exercise the authority of Christ. But people were killed and more Christians were converted thereby. The Christians were thrown to the lions and people came to faith, seeing the faith of these Christians who would sing while they were being thrown to the lions.

So God works in different ways. Like they say, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. That means when martyrs shed their blood, it's the seed from which more people got converted.

That's been true throughout history. That's why you have more conversions in communist China today where so many people are being persecuted. And I believe God may allow that to happen in India to bring more people to Christ.

If so, so be it. Praise the Lord. So here was this situation where they were planning to kill all these peculiar people whose laws were all different from others.

That's the reason, like we saw in Esoteria. These are peculiar people. They don't do certain things like they don't stand with us.

They don't come and bow down to our idols. They are peculiar. And they are willing even to lose their job or lose a promotion if the boss tells them to attend that puja and they don't attend it.

They don't even contribute money to that. They are peculiar, like it says in Esther 3, verse 8. Okay. So Esther said, Okay, now I've got to tell the king this and how shall I do it? So she invited the king and Haman for a dinner.

And Haman was excited. And Haman told his wife, Do you know that the queen has invited me for a dinner tomorrow? They were excited. And in Esther 5, verse 14, his wife was just as bad as him.

So let's make a gallows 75 feet high. Have you ever seen a gallows? I mean, I've seen pictures of people being hanged about 10 feet high from which they hang them and their leg drops. That's enough.

Why do you need a gallows 75 feet high when this roof is only 15 feet? Multiply it five times. 75 feet! It's not to hang the man. He can be hanged with 10 feet, even less than this height.

It is to show all the people around. See this guy. He tried to defy me.

He wanted to hang Mordecai on that as the guy who will not bow down to me. So he went to this feast, Esther chapter 5, and the king and Esther said, I want to have another feast tomorrow, verse 8, 5, 8. And the man was delighted. Another feast tomorrow, great.

But as he went out, he saw Mordecai there, and Mordecai would not stand up or respect him, and he got furious. He controlled himself. He said, by tomorrow, I'll have this thing hanged.

That's when they decided to make the gallows, verse 14, 75 feet high. Now see what happens. Next day, there's going to be the feast, and it's going to be time for the order to go out for all the Jews, stroke Christians, to be killed.

But God has a wonderful way of stopping it. How did he do it? Not by killing Haman. No.

He does it in a very humorous way. Very interesting. He prevents the king from going to sleep.

Chapter 6, verse 1. Now, whenever you don't feel sleepy, what should you do? Read some boring history book, right? So the king said, bring the history books. Let me read it. Maybe I'll get to sleep that way.

He knew boring books would put you to sleep. So they started reading the history books. 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, they're reading history books all the way till the next morning, and the king's still not getting sleep, because it has to come to that place in the history book where it says, Esther 6, verse 2, that two of the king's doorkeepers planned to kill him, but Mordecai was the one who reported it and saved the king's life.

And the king said, really? What did we do to Mordecai to reward him for that? And the king's servant said, we did nothing. He saved your life, but we did nothing. He says, I must do something for Mordecai.

And at that moment, see the timing of God, Haman walks in to get permission to kill the Jews. I like the timing of God in all these things. Haman was about to speak to kill the Jews, and he wanted to kill

Mordecai first.

So he said, Haman, before you speak, I want to ask you something. I want to honor somebody, and what shall I do for somebody whom I want to honor? Haman thought, that must be me, right? Verse 6, he said, I'll tell you what you should do. Give him a royal robe, verse 6, put him on the king's horse, and get some honored person to lead him through the city and say to everybody, thus shall you do to the man whom the king and here's Haman coming to get permission to kill Mordecai.

The king said, great, do that for Mordecai. Put him on the horse, and you're the man I trust. You lead him through the city and say this thus will the king.

Can you see the humor in all this? God turns the tables on the devil, and Haman took the robe and took Mordecai through the city, verse 11, and Haman was so ashamed, he took the red cover to his house, and he said everything to Zeresh, his wife, and he said, listen to these words. Zeresh, his wife, and the wise men, verse 13, middle, said to him, if Mordecai, whom you tried to make fall, belongs to this group, sorry, you will not be able to overcome him. One day you'll surely fall before him.

A man like Mordecai refused to do the puja and refused to give money for it. He said, I stand up for my God. We need men like that.

By the time the servants came to call Haman to the banquet, and you know what happened in the rest of the story, he goes to the banquet, and Esther tells, this man is trying to kill my people, and the king said, we heard that he's made a 75 foot gallows for Mordecai, chapter 7, verse 9, take Haman and put him on that 75 foot gallows. The gallows he prepared for Mordecai, he hung on it. The whole story turns around one small event.

What is it? The king could not sleep. This is the God we serve. This is the God who did something in those days when a man ruled over India, and this is the God who's got all authority, even whoever may rule over India today.

We're not afraid. The devil was defeated on the cross 2,000 years ago. Christ shed his blood.

He makes his people weak. Have you seen in the Old Testament Israel surrounded by the enemies, and the enemies are crushed because they trust in God. The early Christians had to run from their enemies, hide in caves.

They tried to destroy Christianity, but it's flourished for 2,000 years. I'm not saying that every religion that flourishes is necessarily of God. Islam has flourished.

Jehovah's Witnesses have flourished. Mormonism has flourished. But there's a spirit in Christianity, the spirit of forgiving, of loving, of not aggressively forcing people, giving people freedom, willing to suffer, and then flourish.

That is a unique message. It's not found in Islam or Jehovah's Witnesses or Seventh-day Adventists or anything. In weakness we triumph.

How did Jesus conquer Satan? That's a great lesson for us. He conquered Satan by a word. Satan, be destroyed.

Finished. That would mean no devil. All you demons who followed Satan, be destroyed.

There would not have been a devil or a demon in the universe for that one sentence. But how does God choose to overcome Satan? By coming as a weak, helpless man, born in a stable, in a cow shed, living in a poor carpenter's home with four brothers and two sisters all sleeping in one room on the floor. Poor family.

I can imagine how Jesus, he didn't have any private room to retreat. No. Joseph didn't have separate bedrooms for all his children.

He was too poor for that, all sleeping on the floor. I've been in some of our brothers' homes in the villages in Tamil Nadu like that and I've been to some of those homes and I think Jesus' home was just like this brother's home. That's all.

One room which is sitting room, drawing room, family room, bedroom, dining room, everything changes its function at different times of the day. One toilet usually outside the house and one kitchen. That's it.

That's how Jesus lived. God allowed his son to grow up in that way in weakness and as a ten-year-old boy the old men would sit there and say, you see that boy there in the middle, that one, the son of Mary? By the way, we don't know who his father is. She got pregnant before she got married.

Illegitimate boy. Bastard. Bastard means illegitimate, by the way.

He heard that. The other boys heard it and they say, hey, Jesus, who's your real father? Tell me. Can you imagine a ten, twelve-year-old boy whose father and mother was known? He suffered from his childhood.

This is almighty God. God allowed Jesus to grow up in all these circumstances so that no human being could ever stand up and say, Lord, you don't know what I've gone through. He'd say, son, I know what you've gone through.

I've gone through what you've gone through. He's a forerunner. He took that place of weakness and he did not destroy the Pharisees.

He allowed them to make fun of him, call him the devil, forgive them. He called me Prince of Devils. And Jesus said, if they call the head of the house Prince of Devils, how much more the members of his family? We are the members of his family.

Have you been called? What are the worst names you've been called? Jesus was called, the head of the house was called Prince of Devils. And Jesus said the members of his family will be called by worse names. You know that verse? You need to know these verses.

Matthew chapter 10 and verse 25. It's enough if the disciple is like his teacher and the servant like his master. If they have, Matthew 10, 25, if they've called the head of the house Prince of Devils, how much less? No.

How much more the members of his family? That means you and I are supposed to be called by names worse than Prince of Devils. Have you been called by that name? I've been called the devil. Even in the early days when I used to preach on the streets in Ernakulam, Cochin.

And the number of names I've been called, heretic, false prophet, the head of the serpent is in Da Costa Square and all these types. The people publish tracts with that. And heretic, spiritual terrorist, all types of things.

It's an honor. It's an honor. How much more the members of his family? Today there are so many people who want to be dignified Christians, who want to be respected by everybody.

They get honor from the president of their country, Prime Minister. Do you think Jesus would have got the Nobel Prize or he was the Prince of Peace, he would never have got the Nobel Peace Prize? We have got such a wrong understanding of Christianity today. So many Christian leaders, Christian countries, they glory in the fact that they know the president personally.

I'm not interested in knowing the president or prime minister. I know Jesus Christ. What are all your presidents and prime ministers? Little peons in the office.

Lowly workers. I know the king. These are the pawns on the chess table.

I know the king. Remember that, my brothers. Don't think it's a great thing but I have no interest in that.

We are to be called bad names. We are to be called misunderstood, everything. That's following the footsteps of Jesus.

God allowed his son to go that way and to be whipped and to be called a criminal and insulted and whipped and finally crucified and killed and on that cross he defeated Satan. What a way to defeat Satan. I say, God, can Satan be destroyed? Isn't that a better way? He says, no.

God says, you don't think like I think. My ways are not your ways. As the heaven is above the earth so are my ways different from your ways.

Lord, why do you allow these first century, third century Christians particularly to be persecuted, burnt at the stake? You could even save them. God says, my son, my daughter, my ways are not your ways. One day when you stand before me, you will understand why I did it that way.

Why I did not allow the early Christians to be friendly with Nero and to have influence with the presidents. I do it another way. That's why I don't care for Christian leaders who know presidents and who know big, big people.

Let them know that. I have no interest in it. I want to go the way of Peter, Paul and James and John who did not know any of the big dignitaries of that day.

They stood as criminals in front of King Felix. But like Jesus, they could say, you have no power over me except what my father gives you. You can't touch me.

Pilate, the man sitting on the throne, he was a slave. He was a slave to people's opinion. The real king there was Jesus standing like a criminal.

And that's how you and I may stand before you. Don't be afraid. In that moment, I will give you words to speak.

You don't have to prepare beforehand that this is what I'm going to say when I stand in court. No, I will give you the words to speak at that moment. God is a God who can speak in that moment to tell you exactly what to say.

When you stand before your, maybe not before a court, maybe before your senior officers and I remember times when in the Navy when I had to say to, you know, I had to stand. Before you stand in the Navy, you stand and salute and you tell, I had to tell my officer, I salute him and say, Sir, I'm a Christian. I can't do that.

It's against my conscience. And he would tell me, if you're in the Navy, get rid of your conscience. I said, I'm sorry, sir, I can't get rid of it.

When I was 22, 23, you know how God rewarded me for that? When I was 24, he said, come out. I want you to serve me. 50 years ago, I said, Lord, is this a reward you're going to give me? I thought I was going to go to the top of the Navy, but he gave me a double promotion, way up to the top to be a servant of the Lord.

He will reward you if you stand up for him and refuse to compromise, but graciously, respectfully, Sir, I'm a Christian and my conscience does not permit me to do that. Forgive me. You know, sometimes people have asked me this question.

Supposing your secretary is sitting in your boss's office and the phone rings and you know what the boss says. If he's asking for me, say, I'm not here. The people ask me, Brother Zack, what should I do? I say, I'll tell you.

There's an answer for everything. Sir, I'm a Christian. Please ask somebody else to pick up that phone and answer it.

Maybe there's a reason why you want to say it, but I don't feel free to say it. Maybe you'll lose your job, but maybe he'll respect you even more. That actually happened to somebody I know who worked in an office and he said, Sir, I can't do that as a Christian.

And that boss respected him so much because he knew that this fellow will be totally loyal to me in this office because he's a Christian. So you never know how God works. Somebody may be sacked, but God will work for you, everything for your very best if you honor him.

I remember one brother who refused to write false accounts when he was born again. And he'd been there for many years in that company. He was terminated.

He didn't have qualifications. He read a book of mine and traveled all the way from where he was to Bangalore to meet me. He said, Brother Zak, you don't know me.

I don't know you. But when I was deciding to take the stand, all the people in my church there said, don't be foolish. You'll lose your job.

As long as you live in this world, you've got to learn to adjust. Adjust is the great word. Adjust with these unbelievers and their standards.

And he said, no, I can't do that. I only want to ask you, Brother Zak, Brother, you did the right thing. You've got a wife and a daughter.

Maybe they will starve. Maybe you will die and they will die of starvation because you stood for the Lord. Be willing for that.

Then he got a bit of a shock. I said, OK, now relax. You won't die.

I'm just saying be willing for that because there's a verse in scripture, 1 Samuel 2, verse 30, Those who honor me, I will honor. So I don't know what God will do for you. We don't know big shots.

It's all poor people in our church. But God will honor you. And sure enough, very soon he got a better job.

God honors those. He doesn't want you to starve. He did not allow Jesus to starve.

Where will he allow you to starve? He will not allow you to sleep on the road's pavements like homeless people. He will not even allow you to live in the slums. I've seen people who joined our church from a slum whose standard of living improved within a few months without our giving them one paisa.

They honored God. So dear brothers and sisters, in the difficult days that lie ahead, read Esther. What a man who ruled India.

And there was a peculiar people there whose laws were all different from everybody else's. And there was a man, Mordecai. And there was a woman, Esther.

There's an example for brothers and sisters who stood for God and how God changed, turned the whole tables on the devil. There it is written about the Jews killing their enemies. We don't kill anybody.

We convert our enemies and make them our friends. We die to ourselves. And we are willing to die physically too.

What a wonderful heritage we have. And in it all, we stand together as brothers and sisters in our local churches stand with one another. As one brother is hurt, we all feel the suffering.

And in little, little experiences in our daily life, we show how we love one another. And the whole world will know these brothers and sisters love one another. We don't want them to see that we are great, clever people.

But let them see that the love of God is in us and that when they hurt us, we will say like Stephen, Lord, don't lay this into their charge. Forgive them, just like our Master. May God help us.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, help us never to forget the things we hear and that we've heard throughout these days. Let your name be glorified, we pray, through every one of us.

We want everyone to go away from here encouraged and bold. Yes, Lord. Thank you for hearing us.

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