

God Sovereignly Chose His Children

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of responding wholeheartedly to God's call, drawing parallels from the stories of Abraham, Zacchaeus, and the sovereignty of God's choice. It highlights the need for immediate obedience, sacrificial worship, secrecy in giving, and flexibility in following God's leading. The message encourages believers to fully commit themselves to God, acknowledging His sovereign choice and responding with unwavering faith and obedience.

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Scripture: Daniel 4:35, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, John 14:15, Romans 9:10, Genesis 22:1

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Description

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Transcript

Let's begin with Daniel chapter 4 and verse 35. I want you to listen and this verse and remember it very carefully. It's a good verse to memorize because in my study of the scriptures, I've never found a verse which so completely expresses the total sovereignty and power of God like this verse and amazingly it was spoken by a heathen king called Nebuchadnezzar after God humbled him and taught him something about his power and sovereignty and he seems to have learned to such a deep lesson through seven years.

You know it says here that he was such a proud man. He was the man who built the first Babylon and he was so proud of what he had built that God humbled him very severely. He was driven away.

We read in verse 33 that he was driven away from mankind and for seven years he began eating grass like cattle and verse 33 middle his body was drenched with the dew of heaven. His hair grew like eagles feathers and his nails like birds claws. He became like an animal to teach him that if you think you're so smart and so capable, God said I can humble you and teach you a lesson.

It's a great warning for all those who become proud of something in their life which they feel they are accomplished or they think they are so smart or they are so capable and the world is full of such people and there are lots of such people in the church as well and they need to learn a lesson from this how God humbled him and taught him you're really if I withdraw my mercy upon you, you'll become like an animal. I don't know whether we realize that if God withdraws his mercy, we'll do the same thing. We'll be crawling on the ground and eating grass and whatever this guy did and when he learned a lesson.

Now God doesn't usually humble people like this. There are many other ways in which he humbles people. This is a very humiliating way to become like an animal and he was a great king and everybody saw this great king now eating grass and with no sense not able to communicate like a man but the result was he learned a much more thorough lesson and it took seven years but he learned such a lesson that many believers have not learned in 20 years or 30 years.

So is it worth going through this to learn a lesson? I'd say sure because as far as I know in the book of Nazareth we'll be in heaven. The guy was so humbled and a lot of believers who have not been humbled like that who know such a lot about Jesus will not be in heaven. It's very important to understand that there's not a single proud person in heaven.

Not even one. The first person who became proud was the highest angel. We don't know his name.

People call him Lucifer. That's not his name. He became the devil in a moment.

In a moment. It didn't take time and from that moment onwards all the angels who became proud with him were cast out and from that moment till now there's never been one proud angel or person in heaven. They cannot live in God's presence and I'll tell you this not one single proud person will ever be there in eternity and God gives us time on this earth to learn humility through the example of Christ.

If we learn it, we will join the saints in heaven. If we don't learn it, some believers have not learned it even in 20-30 years. Okay listen to his statement in verse 35 concerning the total sovereignty of God.

Every word is important. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as zero. Have you learned that? Have you learned that you're a zero in God's presence? Nebuchadnezzar learned it.

That was the greatest lesson he learned. I am a zero and it takes many many years for many believers to learn that. I am a zero and secondly God does exactly according to his will in the host of heaven.

He does what he wants because he's Almighty God. He can do anything he wants in heaven and secondly he does anything he wants among the inhabitants of the earth. There are a number of points here.

One, all the inhabitants of the earth are zero. Second, God does everything he wants in heaven and he does everything he wants among all the inhabitants of the earth. All those enemies of yours, that difficult boss and your difficult neighbor or troublesome people, God is in control of every single one of them.

All the inhabitants of the earth. I tell you many believers haven't learned that. They don't believe God controls all the inhabitants of the earth.

That's why they are complaining if this person did this that person did this to me. You mean God did not know it? Or God could not control it? We read that God makes all things work together for good to those who love him fervently. There's a particular group of people on earth whom God sees and not everyone

who calls himself a believer.

Those who love him with all their hearts. There's a promise for such people. I want to be in that crowd because it's one of the most fantastic promises that God gives.

He says if you love me with all your heart, it's a condition. God says this is what I'll do for you. Every single thing that other people try to do for you, do to you, will work for your good and there are many examples of that.

Joseph is a classic example how his brothers were jealous of him and tried to sell him and it worked for his good. And every other many other stories like that. So God is in control of all the inhabitants of the earth and number four no one can ward off his hand.

That means when God wants to do something God no one can push it away and say you can't do that. If God wants to do something for me through somebody, nobody can push away God's hand. For example if God wants to sanctify me through some suffering, I mean no one will suffer as much as Jesus suffered.

It'll be always much less than that. When the people came to slap Jesus, God didn't stop that man's hand. He could slap when people came to spit on Jesus.

God didn't stop them and he won't stop people who come to do that to you and me. If he wants he can. It says nobody can stop his hand but he allows.

When somebody wants to do something to Jesus or when they wanted to cut off the Apostle Paul's head, God didn't stop that guy with a sword. That guy's sword went right down and cut off Paul's head. When somebody wanted to cut off James the Apostle's head in the prison as per the order of Herod the evil king, God didn't stop his hand.

When a soldier was sent to cut off John the Baptist's head, that great prophet John the Baptist said the greatest prophet in the Old Testament and as he lifted up his sword to cut off John the Baptist's head, God did not stop it. It says here no one can stop his hand but he allows some of his greatest saints to suffer to demonstrate that they will be true to him no matter what happens. Now Jesus is the greatest example.

John the Baptist was another and we are called to follow in their footsteps but you must believe this. This is the greatest account of the sovereignty of God. Start again.

Number one, all the inhabitants of the earth are like zero and it's a wonderful thing if you also accept that place. Zero. He does exactly what he wants in heaven and among all the people on the earth and no one can stop his hand.

No one, no one, no one. I tell you it'll change your life if you believe this verse and no one can say to him, what have you done? What have you done? No one can question him. You know there are believers who try to question God.

Why have you allowed this? Foolish, stupid, idiotic believers. I wish I could get a worse name than that. Now unbelievers doing that I can understand but believers, I hope there is no RLC of believer who will say to God, why have you permitted this in my life? Why have you done this in my life? Why have you let this happen to my wife or why have you let this happen to my husband or my son or daughter? A man who has become, or a woman who has become a zero.

One mark of such a man is he will not question anything. He'll believe this verse. So I want you all to learn a lesson from this evil King Nebuchadnezzar, from the lesson he learned by being converted into an animal for seven years.

Then God restored his kingdom. It says in verse 36, it's a great verse. Once he said this, see what happened.

At that time my reason returned. I like that verse. My dear brothers, I'll tell you your reason has returned when you can confess that.

Till then your reason has not returned. You may think you're a very clever person but you're not. You are really clever if you can quote that verse and mean it from the depth of your heart.

Then I will say to you your reason has returned to you. All of you who think you're very clever and smart, if you cannot say this, you're not. You're only clever in a worldly way.

Then my majesty and splendor was restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. And I was re-established in my sovereignty and surpassing greatness is added to me. And now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt the King of heaven.

For all his works are true and his ways are just and he, verse 37, he is able to humble those who walk in pride. Have you understood that? He is able to humble those who walk in pride. So that is the most perfect and complete and total expression of the sovereignty of God that I have found anywhere in the Bible.

I've never found a verse to equal it and it's amazing. I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired Nebuchadnezzar to say those words. I wish I had understood it at the beginning of my Christian life.

I wish I had some good teachers when I was converted 63 years ago who taught me all this. I could have started off life with a good understanding. But many people, they only told me that your sins can be forgiven except Christ and you'll go to heaven.

Well, I thank God for at least that. But there's so much more in scripture that I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, you have the privilege of hearing some of those wonderful truths in scripture. That does not only mean that you are privileged.

It also means that you're tremendously answerable to God because you have heard so much. To whom more is given, more will be required. Do you think God is going to expect from you only that low level of Christianity that he finds in so many other believers in other churches? No.

If you happen to be here Sunday after Sunday, he's going to expect a lot more than you. Don't ever compare yourself with other Christians. You hear 10 times more truth than so many other people know.

God will expect more from you. I need to warn you about that. And don't ever compare yourself with others because he expects more from you.

And you will see that when Christ comes again, that you will be judged by a higher standard than all those other people. You say, why? Well, because you know so much. Would you rather be at that level and live the low, useless life they live on the earth? No.

Thank God that you hear so much that you can live at the level God wants you to live on this earth and accomplish so much more for Christ and his kingdom before you leave this earth so that when you meet the Lord, you'll be thankful that you could do something for his kingdom instead of waste your life like so many others that you could learn humility, which is the most important thing that is hardly taught or preached in any church. So I want to show you some other verses concerning the sovereignty of God, which is very amazing. Okay, here's another one in Ephesians in chapter 1. You've read this, I'm sure, but I want you to understand it fully.

I'm saying, blessed be God, verse 3, Ephesians 1, 3, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Now, that's something we can rejoice in that if you think of when you read a scripture like that, you read every single word. First of all, the blessing God has blessed us with is spiritual, not financial, not material, not earthly.

You go slowly, word by word, you'll understand. Ephesians 1, 3, every spiritual blessing, nothing left out. If there is any spiritual blessing that God has, it's yours if you claim it.

If you don't claim it, of course, you can live all your life without it. I want to claim every single one. I mean, if somebody gave you a million dollars, you're not going to take ten dollars and leave the rest.

We are so wise when it comes to earthly things. If your office gives you a bonus of a million dollars, how much of that will you claim? Ten? Ten percent? You'll say, I want the last cent of that. Why not have that attitude when you come to God and says, I blessed you with every single blessing of the Holy Spirit in heaven and on earth.

It's yours. Why are we satisfied with anything less than that? I want every single blessing of the Holy Spirit. Everything.

I don't want to live the shallow life that so many Christians live, because God has given me every single blessing of the Holy Spirit in Christ. But I also want to say here, these are heavenly blessings. It says that in verse 3. Heavenly blessings.

In other words, it's not to make you a smart person on the earth or a clever person on the earth or to enable you to make a lot of money or become very famous on the earth or get a name for yourself. None of all that. But your influence on other people, you'll have such a heavenly influence on people.

Spiritual influence. So these words are important. Spiritual blessings, heavenly blessings, and they are in Christ.

You can't get them apart from Christ. Now look at verse 4 very carefully. Ephesians 1.4. Why did he give us these blessings? Not because we deserve them.

Not because you fasted and prayed. No. And not because you accepted Christ.

So any feeling that we have that we are better than somebody else because we took some decision, let's get that out of our head. Why did he give it? Because he chose you and me in Christ. This is where it began.

We must always remember that our Christian life began not when I accepted Christ. No. Millions of years before that, God chose us in Christ.

That's why you're here today. Don't ever let this crazy idea get into your head that you were so wholehearted and that's why you found RLCF and that's why you came here and you sought God so much and God brought you here. All these crazy ideas the devil puts into your head, get rid of it.

Get rid of it. If you haven't got rid of it till now, get rid of it now. I'll tell you why.

God chose you in Christ, period. I tell you the truth of the sovereignty of God, I haven't spoken much about it here, but it's helped me tremendously in my life to take my right place before God with my face in the dust. I see so many believers who have no idea of the amount of arrogance and pride which is in them, which any spiritually minded person can discern.

But because there are so few spiritually minded people, their pride is not discerned by others and everybody thinks they're very humble people and they themselves think they're very humble people. And the devil wants you to think like that all your life. It's like a sick person who doesn't know he's sick.

Now if you got cancer and you don't know you got cancer, it's still going to kill you. You don't have to know that you got cancer for it to kill you. In fact it's much better than you know so you can cure, get it cured.

The most sick person in the world, you know who that is? The one who doesn't know he's sick. And the most, this Christian you feel most sad for is the one who doesn't know he's proud or she's proud. But this is something you got to be a really a really humble to see pride in another.

Otherwise you won't see it. Jesus can see pride in so many people. It says in one place, let me show you that verse in John chapter 2. It's a very frightening verse.

John chapter 2, verse 23 and 24 and 25. Very important verses. John chapter 2 verse 23.

Please look at it carefully in your Bible. During the Passover feast many people believed in Jesus' name, observing the signs which he was doing. Believing means they committed themselves to him.

Let's read it like that. They saw the signs, the miracles Jesus did and they committed themselves to him. But he did not commit himself to them.

Aha! You know what it's like at a wedding. A person conducting the wedding asks the woman, would you like to marry this man? She says yes. Ask the man, would you like to marry this woman? He says no.

Ever been in a wedding like that? That's what's happening here. They say we want to commit ourselves to you Lord. Lord says I don't want to commit myself to him.

That's what it says here. They committed themselves to him but he would not commit himself to them. Why? Because it says he knew what was in them.

Because he did not need anyone to testify concerning man because he knew what was in them. Why does this at the wedding, this man say I don't want this woman? Because he knows what is in her. He knows that she is not totally committed to him.

She's got some interest in other things and other people. He can see through that this woman is interested in some other man also. Not just me.

Would you marry a woman who is interested in some other man also? Just one other man? You'd also say no. Supposing she says I'm interested in only one other man. Would you marry a woman who says I'll be with you every day of the year except one day.

Please let me be with that other man one day of the year. Would you marry him? Would you marry her? No. The Christian life is a marriage and Jesus wants to be married only to those who are committed to him every single day of the year, every single hour.

Would you marry a woman who says one hour in a year can you let me be with another man? You say no. Are you so exclusive in your marriage? Well I want to tell you Jesus also is. He will not spare you even one hour in a year to be with somebody else.

You are to be exclusively his. That is the Christianity I believe in. That is the Christianity I seek to live and that is the only Christianity that I preach because that is the truth.

Many people who just accept Christ, they've never committed themselves to them. In fact many married people are more committed to their marriage partner than they are to Jesus Christ. I'll tell you that.

You search your own heart. I believe all of you who are married here, all of you, will not want even one hour to be with another person other than your partner. I'm absolutely sure that you're loyal to your partner.

Your marriage is a good marriage but your marriage to Christ is not so loyal. A few hours you want to be with something else. You want to be something in the world.

You want to be in and the world is the other one who's always it that's the other man who's trying to attract the Bride of Christ always and the fact is and I've seen it with many many believers that they go after that other man because that man offers them money. That man offers them a easier life without being so radically committed to Christ. That man says you don't have to settle everything in your life before you come to me.

When you go to Christ you have to settle every wrong thing you ever did in your life. But he says come to me I won't ask you that. You can leave some things unsettled in your past life.

Come to me I'll still accept you. You can have debts that you never repay. Come to me.

Jesus says no you can't come to me if you have debts that you don't want to settle. If you've wronged other people and you don't want to ask forgiveness this world says come to me I'll accept you. Christ says no.

I will not accept you. If there's somebody you wronged and you don't ask his forgiveness sorry I can't accept you. Jesus is very a demanding bridegroom.

If there's somebody you cheated. If you cheated the government. Jesus says you can't come to me.

The world says come. You can come to me. Why you want to go to him? Come to me I'll accept you with all the wrong things you did.

You don't have to give it up. You don't have to settle anything. I'm telling you the truth.

I've seen it through the years. I have to speak the truth because the Lord will ask me in the final day did you tell them the whole truth? I'd say yes Lord I did. But if they didn't obey it that's their business.

Jesus did not commit himself to them because he knew what was in man. Okay let's turn back to Ephesians 1. Why did he bless us with all these blessings? Every blessing of the Holy Spirit. You know a lot of people say I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I want to tell you my dear brother sister every single blessing of the Holy Spirit Ephesians 1 3 is yours. But it will not be yours if you want this partial type of marriage to Christ. No.

If you have the 90% type of commitment to Christ and 10% you're interested in something else. Every blessing of the Holy Spirit is not yours. Probably no blessing of the Holy Spirit is yours.

You can pray for the next 40 years to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. It will not happen. You'll get some fake experience that accomplishes nothing.

But just like in your marriage when you think of Christ think of your marriage. How totally committed you are. I believe all of you as I repeat you are totally loyal to your husband to your wife.

You don't even think of another man or woman. Praise the Lord for such good marriages. I'm just inviting you to have exactly the same type of marriage to Christ and have nothing to do with the world.

It's always trying to attract you. And then you'll be baptized in the Holy Spirit like that in a moment. Not only that every blessing of the Holy Spirit verse 3 Ephesians 1 3 will be yours.

And the reason is not because you're so good. Because he chose you before the foundation of the world. You know Ephesians 1 4 comes before Genesis 1 verse 1. Genesis 1 verse 1 is not actually the first verse in terms of history.

Ephesians 1 4 comes even before that. And John chapter 1 verse 1 comes before that. In the beginning was the Word.

The Word was with God and the Word was God. At that time God chose us in Christ before Genesis 1 verse 1. Let me read it like that. Before Genesis 1 verse 1 he chose us in Christ.

And why did he choose us? Not to go to heaven. This crazy idea that so many believers have. I'm going to heaven.

You know that Jesus never promised anyone heaven? Show me a verse in the Bible where Jesus promised he'd take you to heaven. He promised you eternal life. Come to me that I'll give you life not I'll give you heaven.

Search it. This is a false gospel that so many people have preached. It's because people don't read the Bible.

Like I've often said this. If you can read in whatever language and you got a Bible in your language and you don't read it and you don't study it and you don't believe it then you deserve to be deceived. Who are the people who deserve to be deceived and not know that they are deceived? Those who got a Bible in their language and they don't study it carefully.

The purpose of all our preaching here in RLCF and in all of our CFC churches is to make sure you know the scriptures thoroughly. Because in many other churches they don't preach it. I'm not giving interpretation.

I'm just reading. I'm going. The only thing is I'm going word by word.

That's all. So that you get it thoroughly. That's all I'm doing.

I'm explaining every word. I'm not preaching any new doctrine. But it just goes to show you how much you can find yourself.

If you go slowly. Blessed is the man it says in Psalm 1. Not who reads the word but who meditates on the Word of God day and night. Whatever he does will prosper.

I want such a life that whatever I do will prosper and immediately your mind goes to money. Uh-huh. The world is so close to pull you away immediately.

I'm not thinking of financial prosperity. I'm thinking of spiritual prosperity. That I'll prosper spiritually in my life.

That I'll prosper spiritually in my family life. That my children will prosper again spiritually. That I'll prosper in my ministry, spiritual ministry.

Zero. I'm not interested in financial prosperity. I say that before God.

I'm not interested in financial prosperity. I'm totally interested in spiritual prosperity. That whatever I do I will prosper spiritually.

But my life will be a blessing to every person I meet in my entire life. That is spiritual prosperity. Tell me.

Do you want that or do you want a lot of money? Be honest before God. Tell him. Lord I don't want a lot of money.

I want to be a blessing to every person I meet in my life. That is spiritual prosperity. And I tell you, you will have what you want.

What you do not what you say but what you really want deep down in your heart. He chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy, not rich, not perfect, not even healthy, but holy and blameless before him. Blameless before men is an easy thing.

It's an external thing. I think most of us if not all of us are blameless before men. It counts for zero.

I'm sorry to say that but it counts for zero. Aim for this expression. Blameless before him.

Did you see that? Blameless in his presence. I'm just trying to show you. You see how much you learn by just if you go word by word in a single verse.

You spend half an hour meditating on one verse. You get such a lot and I'm sure you read these words many times in your life but you never got much out of this verse. But you got such a lot today because we went word by word and you could have done that at home.

And the whole Bible is like this. It's the Word of God to be blameless before him. In love he predestined us.

Again that is like before the foundation of destiny that was started before Genesis 1 verse 1 to become his sons and we'd say because we accepted Christ. No. According to the kind intention of his will.

It was his choice and the purpose was not for you to become a wonderful Christian so that you can get some honor for yourself. No. It is to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Verse 6. If you want to be a Christian to get praise and honor from other people for how spiritual you are, forget it. This is not for such people. This is those who want to be to the praise of his glory.

Lord I want you to be glorified in my life. We're talking about true Christianity here. Not the you know third-rate watered-down Christianity that is preached in most churches because the only thing the pastors in those churches are interested in is your money.

This is one church where no brother is interested in your money. Not the elders. We don't have a pastor but no elders are interested in anybody's money.

That's why we can speak the truth. The person who's interested in somebody's money will never tell him the truth because he may not get that guy's money and there are millions and millions of people all over the world today who are being this who are being thoroughly deceived by pastors who are only interested in their money. Thank God you're not in such a church.

Never ever join such a church unless you want to be deceived. So now I want to turn you to Romans chapter 9 which is one of those chapters. I'll tell you honestly it's a very difficult chapter to understand and it's not a chapter that many people read or try to understand but because it is part of the Word of God we need to understand it even if it's difficult to understand.

Romans chapter 9 speaks about the sovereign choice of God of his people. We've often heard about the manward side of it. That is when we accept Christ we become his children which is true but here it says about something happened that happened long before we accepted Christ.

I need to understand that. It says here it takes an example from the Old Testament that Rebecca verse 10 chapter 9 verse 10 that is Isaac's wife Rebecca had twins by Isaac and before the twins were born while they were in the womb they had never done anything good or bad. Twins inside the womb have never done anything good or bad so that God's purpose according to his choice will stand not because of works but because he calls he said the older will serve the younger.

I have loved Jacob but Esau I hate it. When? When they were in the womb and then immediately your question comes you know we are all clever people. How in the world can a righteous God do that? You know what it says here? Verse 20.

Who are you old man to answer back to God? Who are you to question God? Do you have a question like that? Did that occur to your mind when I just read it? That they were twins and God said Jacob I love while Esau I hate it. There's a question come in your mind. Is there injustice with God? Are you more righteous than God? That is why I told you Romans chapter 9 is a difficult chapter.

Many people don't go into it but there's I wonder if there's any chapter that humbles man like this chapter to recognize that it was God's sovereign choice of me that made me his child. It humbles me like anything and he says in verse 15 I will have mercy on whom I choose to have mercy. Why did God have mercy on me? Not because I accepted Christ.

God chose to have mercy on me. I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. Why did God have compassion on me? Because he just decided.

Why did he have compassion on you? I hope this humbles you so thoroughly that you don't think that you did something to get God's mercy and compassion. That's what I want to eliminate from everybody's mind today. I hope I succeed.

You need to go back home and study Romans chapter 9. So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs but on God who has mercy. You say you've always exhorted us to be wholehearted. Yes.

You remember when the devil said to Jesus it is written. Jesus said it is also written. That is the full truth.

It is true. Let us press on to perfection. Hebrews 6.1. I preached that.

I preached it all my life. It is also written. It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs and you say I can't understand that.

I'll tell you why. Because our mind is finite and this is the word of the infinite God and there are some things in Scripture which you have to just humble yourself and say I believe it. I accept it.

I don't understand it. I'll probably never understand it fully until I see my Lord face to face. But I'm not going to live on this earth saying I will only believe what I can explain.

I will only believe what my clever mind can understand. Our mind is stupid compared to God's wisdom. I've acknowledged that.

I believe God's given me a good mind. That's no credit to me. I was born with it.

But I humble myself before God and say Lord no matter how much I study the Scriptures your mind is so much beyond mine. There are truths I cannot explain fully but I accept it by faith and it changes my life. It's those who argue and question.

There are people like that. Very clever people. They read something and say no no no I got to explain it.

Brother then you'll never make progress in your Christian life. If you want to make progress in the Christian life you must say there's a certain amount you'll understand but there's a whole lot of God's wisdom you'll never understand. You got to accept by faith.

Many things and this is one of those things. The free will of man. We've all understood that very clearly.

I can choose to sin. I can choose to be holy. When Adam and Eve stood before the tree of knowledge of good and evil they had a free will.

They could choose either to eat it or refuse the devil's temptation. They exercised their free will and ate it. Even though God had told them in the day you eat it you will die.

And you know what the devil said? You will not die. I'm sure that you you must understand this. Please turn to Genesis chapter 3. The woman understood what God said very clearly.

She told Satan who came in the form of a serpent. Genesis 3. God has told us the last part of verse 3. You shall not eat from it or touch it. She added something.

We've always got the habit of adding something to God's Word. Eve started that habit. God never said anything about touching it.

You read Genesis 2. He never said anything about touching it. You can touch it as much as you like. He only said don't eat of it.

But she tried to be holier than God. You try to be holier than God sometimes. She thought I'll be holier than God.

God said you shall not eat it. No. He also said you don't touch it.

It's this carelessness with God's Word that led Eve astray and that leads so many Christians astray. There are many Christians who read that who haven't even noticed it. Maybe till today.

Till I pointed out to you. That is how carelessly we read God's Word. That's why we get deceived too.

Read God's Word exactly. God said you shall not eat it. Period.

Eve added you shall not touch it. No. That's one thing.

Adding to God's Word. The other thing is subtracting from God's Word. And here you shall not eat from it or touch it or you will die.

And in the King James Version it says lest you die. The possibility you may die. But what did the Lord actually say? You will surely die.

So what I see in Eve's quoting God's Word is adding something and subtracting something. Saying you must not touch it but God never said it. God said you will surely die.

She left out that surely die. Yeah. Possibility that you may die.

But the devil says, verse 4, you will surely not die. We can learn something from this. The devil's attitude to God's Word.

No, no, no, no. It's not like that. Even some of the things we just read today.

Maybe they confuse you a bit. The devil said no, no, no. Don't take all that seriously.

Use your mind. Don't just swallow everything that you hear. You're not hearing brother Zach.

I read only scripture. But we've not read it carefully. And what happened? What is the result of Eve, first of all, using her own mind, slightly modifying God's Word.

And when the devil saw that she had modified God's Word a little bit, he modified it a little more. And said you will not die. Don't worry.

You surely will not die. So we see that sin came, not the initial step was not eating. It's very important for you to notice that.

Many people say, how did sin come? It came by Eve eating the fruit. Yeah, that was the second step. The first was she modified God's Word.

That's how she felt. If she had not modified God's Word and took God's Word seriously, she would not have eaten of it. When she modified God's Word, the devil put a little more into it.

No, no, no. You will not die. That's exactly what happens.

And I've heard, you know, for example, some of the things I say now. I've told people, for example, this matter of restitution. Turn with me to Luke's Gospel in chapter 19.

Why do I take this passage? Because if you read through the Gospels carefully, you will find one thing. All the four Gospels, there is only one place, only one, where Jesus looked at a man and said, you have got salvation and your house has got salvation. That was Zacchaeus.

In Luke 19, verse 9. Today, salvation has come to this house. He never said that about anybody else. And when I hear Jesus making such a fantastic statement, I say, Lord, I want to be there, too.

I want you to look at me and say salvation has come to this man's house, to my house. Can you say that to me? Okay. Read the previous verses.

First of all, this man was very eager to meet Jesus. That's the first thing I need. He was so eager that he climbed up a tree to see him.

You read that in verse 4. And then Jesus saw that eagerness. He's always delighted whenever he sees someone eager to meet with him, whether you or me or anybody. And he says, hurry up and come down, verse 5. I want to stay in your house today.

And he got so excited and humbled that this man, son of God, would deign to come and stay in his house. Not just visit. Read verse 5. I want to stay tonight in your house.

He hurried, came down and received him gladly. Others criticized him. People may criticize you.

Now listen to what happens. As they approach Zacchaeus' house, it says in verse 8, he stopped. I don't think you'll find that expression anywhere else in the Gospels.

As far as I know, it's the only place. Zacchaeus and Jesus are walking together and suddenly he stops in front of his house. He says, stop.

Why? I want to expand what he says in verse 8. He says, Lord, I've cheated many people in my life. I'm a tax collector. And it's very easy.

Tax collectors today are about the same. I can make a lot of money by getting bribes, cheating people, reducing their taxes by collecting bribes from them, cheating the government. Tax collectors have been the same through the centuries.

This tax and all of Israel knew that. These tax collectors will definitely go to hell because they're all crooks. And Zacchaeus says, yeah, it's true.

I'm a crook. I've cheated a lot of people. And this wonderful house that you see here is built with that money I cheated people from.

So Lord, before you enter my house, I want to tell you something before you step in. I am going to return all that money so that I can say this house is built with my money, completely honest money. Right now it is not.

Once I return all that money, then I can live peacefully in this house saying this house is built 100% with honest money. I've not cheated the Roman government. I've not cheated any individual.

I did not take a bribe from anybody to get business from anyone. No. And I'm going to give back people money with interest.

If I took \$1,000 from somebody, I'm going to give him back \$4,000. That man's really been delivered. He's not going to calculate and say it should be thousand and 10.30 cents.

No. Let me add a little extra. I cheated him.

I'll give him \$4,000 back. I cheated somebody else of \$2,000. I'll give him \$8,000 back.

Because I want to be completely free. I'll give him four times. And then Lord, there are a lot of people whose address I don't know.

I don't know where they live now. What about that money that's in my bank account? I can't use it. It's unrighteous.

I must empty it. You know, some other people already said, what to do? I don't know where they are. So how can I return it? Let me keep it here.

No, no, no, no, no. This man was so righteous. I don't know where they are.

But I can't keep it in my account because it's not my money. I didn't honestly earn it. I will give it to the poor.

Or in today's language, I'll put it in the offering box. I know one brother in a CFC church who put in the US, I think it was nearly \$100,000. He gave some huge amount.

I don't remember the exact what is such a fantastically huge amount. He said, I got this unrighteously from some organization. And there's no way for me to be able to return it to that organization.

But I cannot keep it in my account. He became poor. But he became godly.

His children began to follow the Lord. Was it worth it? When Christ comes back, you'll see whether it was worth it or not. You will see that brother in that day.

And you will see his children. And then you will say, brother, you made the right choice. Because your children are following the Lord today.

They're in heaven. He gave back. That is when Jesus said, today's salvation has come to this house.

I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, can Jesus say that to you? Salvation has come to your house. I remember the day when Jesus could say that to me. I had also cheated the Indian government in my unconverted days.

And one of the first things the Lord told me after I got my took my baptism was, give it back. And it involved a huge amount of money. I had to work a number of months to save that money while I was in the Navy.

And the day came when I emptied my bank account and gave that money back. My bank account was empty. My heart was full.

Soon after God filled me with the Holy Spirit and gave me a ministry. Very soon after that, gave me the ability to preach. This is way back in 1963.

That such a shy reserved person like me, God filled me with the Spirit. And within two years after my baptism, I was preaching to 5,000 people. For a whole hour, God met with me.

I'm just saying that for your encouragement. He doesn't call everybody to a public ministry, but he'll bless you in some way beyond your imagination. I cannot imagine that could happen to me because I'm such a shy reserved person basically.

But things change when God fills you with the Holy Spirit. You know, Jesus chooses us, but he sees whether we want to respond to his call or not. Let's turn back to Romans 9. God chose Zacchaeus before the foundation of the world, but that salvation became his when he responded as wholeheartedly as Jesus took him.

There's a marriage again. Zacchaeus and Jesus getting married. Zacchaeus, do you want this man to be your husband? You have to pay a price.

You have to settle all those things in your past life. He says, sure, yes. And just to be sure, I'll give four times back so that I'm not in debt to anybody.

And then Jesus, do you want Zacchaeus to be your bride? Yes. He committed himself to him and Jesus committed himself to him. Very different from what we read in John chapter 2. Now the question is, my brother, sister, would you and I in this place, do you want to commit yourself to Christ? Same question Zacchaeus faced.

God has had mercy on you. He chose you before the worlds were created. What a tremendous thing to recognize that before Genesis 1 verse 1, way back in eternity, God had my name in his mind.

Your name. How are you going to respond to him? Are you going to respond in a cheap, miserly way, calculating? Oh, do I have to give this? Do I have to give that? Nobody in the Bible was like that. God said to Abraham, give your son.

He took his son and went. And he said, walk three days to Mount Moriah. He could have told him to offer his son around the corner.

Why three days? You know it says in Genesis 22, God made Abraham walk three days because he never wants us to take a decision in a hurry. Three days he walked to Mount Moriah. Is it worth serving a God like this? Is it worth following a God who wants me to kill my son? Every day, 72 hours he's thinking.

Is it worth giving up all this to serve such a God? Giving up all this. Zacchaeus is thinking. Zacchaeus didn't need three days.

In one moment he said, yes, it's worth giving up all my money to serve such a God, to set everything right in my life. And Abraham thought of it for three days and he said, sure. This is my act of worship.

Yeah, there's a lot on the subject, but let me conclude with Genesis 22. Let's turn there, please. In Genesis 22, there are just a few things I want to tell you quickly.

The first thing you see is, verse 1, God called him Abraham and he said, here I am. That's the first thing I want you to learn. We must always be ready to hear.

Like these walkie-talkies that police officers have in the police car. They may be doing so many other things, but this walkie-talkie is always on. A sound from headquarters.

Emergency on certain streets. Go there. They drop everything and go.

It has to be on all the time. That is how our communication with God must be. Wherever you are, whatever you are, Lord speak to me.

I'm ready. God called Abraham and he said, yes, I am. It was the middle of the night.

Middle of the night. I say this middle of the night because verse 3 says he rose up early in the morning. In the middle of the night, God called him and he was ready to listen.

Take your son and take him to the land of Moriah. What did he do? Early in the morning, he got up and took his son and went. That's the second thing.

Immediate obedience. He doesn't have to think about it. Zacchaeus, immediate obedience.

How is it with you when God tells you to do something? You had to pray about it, think about it. God's told you. Thirdly, he did not consult his relatives.

He did not even consult Sarah. What do you think Sarah would have said? He said, hey Sarah, I'm just taking my son around the corner to kill him. What do you think Sarah would have told him? Sarah hadn't heard God.

There are times when God may say to you something as the head of the house. Your wife may not have heard. Sacrifice.

Something costly. Not something where you want to make some money. I'm not talking about such incidents.

A lot of husbands say, God told me to go somewhere to make my money. Doesn't matter. My wife hasn't heard.

I'm talking about where you have to make a sacrifice of everything. He did not consult his relatives. God told me to go.

I don't have to consult any relative of mine. I'm gonna obey. Fourthly, he did not consult his own reason.

What do I think? Is this a good thing to kill my son? When you're sure that God has told you something in his word, there's no need to consult reason. That's what I found through the years. I'm telling you how you can live a wholehearted Christian life.

Then it says here, when they reached the place and the people asked him, where are you going? The servants had come with him. He told the servants in verse 5 of Genesis 22, you stay here. And does he say, I'm going up there to kill my son to show God how much I love him? No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Make your sacrifices secretly. Don't let anybody know the sacrifices you make. He says, I'm going up to worship God.

What a way he expresses it in verse 5. I'm going up there to worship my God. He didn't tell him anything. Didn't tell them anything about what a tremendous price he was paying for that worship.

To kill his own son. That's another thing I learned there. When you are doing something for God, don't make a boast about it.

Call it an act of worship, even though it may be a tremendous sacrifice. You know, Jesus said, don't let your left hand know the money that your right hand gave to somebody to help someone or do some work for the Lord. Keep it secret.

So our worship must be in secret. And the other thing we learned here in Abraham is, he did not offer 10,000 sheep instead of his son. When God asked for something, don't give him second best.

Give him everything. Abraham would have gladly offered all his sheep and goats and whatever he had. But when God said, your son, he gave his son.

And the last thing I want to say is, he was very flexible. As he took up his knife to kill his son. It says he stretched out his knife in verse 10.

The knife was coming down and God said, stop. He was flexible. He didn't say, no, no, no, I've got to kill him.

There's stupid believers like that. When God says something, he says, no, no, no, I'm going to kill him. You told me that time to kill him, I'm going to kill him.

Thank God he was flexible. I like that. And so what does God say to him? Abraham, middle of verse 12.

Oh, this is one of the finest passages in this life of Abraham. Now I know that you fear God. I remember when I read it, I said, Lord, will you say that to me, please? Will you please say to me, I'll pay any price.

Say to me, now I know that you fear God because you have not withhold your son from me. He'll say that to you. If you give your best to him and don't consult relatives and pay any price, think about it three days.

You say, Lord, you'll have my best. He'll give you the best. And he'll say, I swear, verse 16, God says, because you did this, verse 17, and he'll say that to you also.

What is it? I'll greatly bless you. I'll multiply your children like the stars of heaven. Your seed will overcome their enemies.

And all people will be blessed through you because you've obeyed my voice. My dear brothers and sisters, all I have to say is God has sovereignly chosen us. He sovereignly chose Abraham.

He went into that land of so many people. He said, Abraham, you. And that's how he chose you and me.

Looked around the earth and he picked you before the foundation of the world. Now question is, will you respond like Abraham? If you do, there is no limit to the blessing that can flow from your life to thousands of people. I've seen a little bit of it in my life, a little bit.

It can be yours. There's no partiality with God. But if you believe God sovereignly chose you and says, I want to marry you as fully as he has committed himself to you.

Dear brother, dear sister, equally, fully commit yourself to him just like you did to your wife. Just like you did to your husband. Without anybody and interest in anyone else.

You say only my husband, only my wife. You say only Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, please help us. I don't feel I can ever do justice to your wonderful word. I tried my best.

Please help everyone through your Holy Spirit to understand this wonderful truth of your sovereign choice. Not because we deserve anything like you chose Abraham out of the multitude. You one day chose us before the foundation of the world.

Help us to respond as Abraham did like Zacchaeus did. Like the great saints have done through the ages. Help us to respond.

We pray that no one sitting here having heard this message will miss out because they are counting some cost and not willing to pay the price. Help us, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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