

God's Shepherds and God's Promises

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of enduring in love until the end, focusing on the need for faithful shepherds after God's own heart who will love and care for the flock unconditionally. It highlights the significance of acknowledging sin, returning to God, and being loved by Him until the end, mirroring Jesus' love for His disciples despite their failures and betrayals.

Scripture: Jeremiah 3:12, John 13:1, 2 Chronicles 25:9, Matthew 9:36, Ephesians 5:1

Topics: "Endurance in Love", "Faithful Shepherds"

Description

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Transcript

We are very thankful to the Lord that we've been able to have conferences regularly for more than 40 years. I think we had the first one in 1976 in our house, and then as the numbers increased, we met in different places. And as the numbers kept increasing, we had to find bigger halls, and always they would keep hiking up the rent for these halls.

We had to pay huge amounts of money just to rent a hall. But God's always provided our need, but we couldn't always be sure that we'd always have enough for more people who came in. I think the last hall we had before we had this place was, could accommodate only 700 people.

And last year at the conference, we had 1,500 people here. This time we had to limit it to only 1,000 people. We had to tell people, please don't everybody come, because we don't have a place here.

If we had just opened this up to anybody who wanted to come, there'd be 5,000 people who would come at least, and who would be even willing to pay to come. Of course, we charge nothing. All these years, everything that we've offered in a conference is absolutely free.

Accommodation is free. Food is free. Everything is free.

All these 44 years, except for those who want to stay on their own and choose a better accommodation, but food is free for everyone. And it's amazing how God has always provided our need without our ever

taking a single offering in any conference or meeting all these 44 years. It's something we have to be thankful for, because India is not a wealthy country.

It's known as a poor country, and the cost of living is going up all the time. And so it's wonderful to see how God's people, they love him, they sacrifice. And when the Lord catches a fish, real fish, not fake fish, a real disciple of Jesus, when the Lord catches a disciple of fish, there'll always be a coin in the mouth of that fish, which he gives to the Lord, like he did when he told Peter to go and catch a fish.

We don't look for the coin. We look for the fish. And we don't use the coin for ourselves.

We use the coin to bless God's people in different places. It's amazing that is God's way, and we praise the Lord for it. You see, when we experience the Lord in practical terms, that proves to us that he's a living God.

We don't teach that Jesus heals all sicknesses, because I don't read that in scripture. But we do believe that when a person is sick, it says the elder should pray for them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith, where God gives faith, there'll be healing, and we've seen numerous healings.

Through the years we don't talk about it. We've seen people healed through prayer over a telephone, and saved from surgery the next day, and healed. But we don't talk about these things, because these are not the big things.

Even the provision of financial needs is not the big thing. The main thing we rejoice in is that people have become disciples, learned to love Jesus, more and more people have become free from sin, and God has raised up godly leaders in all of our churches. That's a very important mark of God's blessing.

We read that once Jesus looked out at the people, we read that in the end of Matthew 9, 36-38, and he saw the people like sheep without a shepherd. Please turn to that verse, Matthew 9, 36. This is how Jesus saw the people then, he's the same yesterday, today, forever, and this is how he sees the people today as well.

Seeing the people, he felt compassion for them. He still feels compassion as he looks out at the multitude of people who are following false religions, trying to do all types of works, burning candles, giving money, rolling on the ground, dipping themselves in rivers, in order to get their sins forgiven. We may say, ah, those things happen, but Jesus does not say like that.

We just read that in the papers and say, no, Jesus looks at them with compassion. And I always pray, Lord, please give me the same compassion that is in your heart. It's no use saying, I want to be like Jesus and spend my life trying to make money.

No. If I want to be like Jesus, I want to have compassion on the people of my country and wherever God takes me, and I want to look at them the way Jesus looks at them. I want to have the eyes of Jesus for the world and for his people.

I can't reach the whole world. I can reach only a very small number, a tiny number whom God puts within my circle, and if I'm faithful there, he'll keep increasing the circle, and that will happen to all of us. If you're faithful in the small circle, God will increase that circle.

But in the small circle where you are, God wants you to be a true witness for him. Nobody in your circle may get converted. Never mind.

But let the light shine. Have compassion for them. You know, all of us here sitting, every person sitting here, listen to me.

There are some people you know that nobody else in the hall knows. Isn't that right? There are some people I know whom even my wife does not know, whom none of you know. And there are some people you know, maybe five or ten people, but there are some people you know whom nobody in this hall knows.

That is a little world of your own, and God so loved that little world of people you know that he sent you, his son, his daughter, into that world that they should not perish but have everlasting life. That is John 3.16 for you. God so loved the little world of people whom you know that he sent his son and daughter, you, into that world so that none of them should perish but have eternal life.

But will they all get converted? No. God sent his son into the world and most of the people are not converted. So the people in your world may not be converted.

But God sent his son into the world and some were converted. And where you go in your little world, God wants some, maybe one, maybe two, to turn to the Lord. I want to ask you my brothers and sisters, would you like to live your whole life in this world and finally stand before the Lord and say, Lord, I never brought anybody to Christ.

I came, but you gave me 30 years on earth, I never brought a single soul to Christ. I never witnessed to anybody about you because I was ashamed. Ashamed? When I was in the Navy, I had a big struggle because I was a naval officer and a lot of people respected me in the naval base.

All the sailors had to salute me. If they passed me ten times a day, they had to salute me ten times a day. That's military discipline.

And when I felt a burden in non-working hours, Wednesday we had half day, Saturday we had half day, Sunday full day off. And during my off time I could take off my uniform and put on civilian clothes I had a burden to stand outside the naval base on the road and preach the gospel. But I said these fellows who salute me will see me standing there and they'll laugh at me.

What is this officer standing here and preaching here like some vegetable vendor selling vegetables? And I had a great struggle, so I would never stand there. I'd go far away, five, ten miles away where nobody knew me and I would preach there. And I thought I was very bold.

And I said Lord, I have to say I'm still ashamed to let my junior sailors see me preaching about you. But I don't want to be. You were not ashamed to hang on a cross for me with just an underwear.

That's all that Jesus was wearing on the cross, an underwear. I mean just to go out walking in the street with an underwear is a shameful thing. But Lord Jesus you hung on a cross for me with an underwear and you were not ashamed and you did that for me.

I never want to be ashamed of you. No matter even if I'm the admiral of the Navy I don't want to be ashamed of you. I don't want to be ashamed of you before anybody.

I don't want to be ashamed to be seen praying over my food in the naval officer's mess. And I don't want to be ashamed to be seen praying publicly. I never want to be ashamed of you.

You are the Lord of this universe. Why should I be ashamed? And I said Lord, I want the day to come when I will stand right outside the naval base and preach the Gospel and let these people laugh at me. But I can't do it.

I don't have the power. I want you to fill me with the Holy Spirit. Because you said you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and then you will be my witnesses.

And I said Lord that's what I'm lacking. I'm born again. I know I'm going to heaven.

I'm baptized in water. I need to be anointed with the Holy Spirit like Jesus was. Even Jesus.

You know Jesus never went out into the ministry till he was anointed with the Holy Spirit. And how many Christians there are who think that yeah I can go out to serve God without being anointed with the Holy Spirit. Really? Jesus the Son of God who lived a perfect life for 30 years who studied the scriptures so well that he knew it at the age of 12.

Some people think if I know the Bible I can preach. Jesus knew it at 12. Why didn't he preach for the next 18 years? One reason.

He was not anointed with the Holy Spirit. And we read, I don't know, about Jesus' baptism. Luke chapter 3 verse 21.

When all the people were baptized Jesus also was baptized and while he was praying heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came upon him. Did the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus without his praying? No. Even Jesus had to pray to be anointed with the Holy Spirit.

So when he was baptized, you know what he was praying. Most people when they get baptized want to make sure the water doesn't go into my nose. That's good.

But Jesus was more interested in being anointed with the Holy Spirit when he came out of the water. And he was praying when he went into the waters. Father this is the beginning of my ministry.

Anoint me with the Holy Spirit please. Somebody could say Lord Jesus you lived such a perfect life. You know the Bible so well.

You can preach anywhere. Yeah, that knowledge is not enough. I have knowledge even to confound the great scholars and priests here.

But that's not what I want. I want the supernatural anointing of the Holy Spirit which will take my words and accomplish God's purposes. He prayed and as soon as he came out the Holy Spirit descended on him.

What was Jesus praying for? I know. Because Jesus' prayers were always answered immediately. And the Holy Spirit came upon him.

I know what he was praying for. He was praying that the Holy Spirit come upon him. And so here I was in the naval base afraid to stand outside.

I would stand far away where nobody knew me. But to stand outside where my senior officers will see me standing there. My junior sailors will see me standing there.

My colleagues will see me. And they will really laugh and make fun of me. And I prayed and I tell you for nearly one year I couldn't go.

I would go far away and preach. But I prayed and prayed and God met with me and he gave me power. I said I'll never believe that I received that power till I have the boldness to stand right outside the naval base on that road and preach the gospel.

And I was afraid of people standing and making fun of me. You know they would stand there and make fun of me. And the Lord gave me an amazing verse which I'd never seen before as to his power.

And that's in Genesis 41. I've never forgotten that verse. You know in Genesis 41 it's not really, it's connected to what the Lord made clear to me that day when I was seeking, afraid of people making fun of me or pointing a finger at me or laughing at me or saying things about me.

In Genesis 41 we read about Joseph. Verse 14. Pharaoh called for Joseph.

And Joseph came and he interpreted the dream and Pharaoh said in verse 38, Can we find a man like this in whom is a divine spirit? And so he said in verse 40, Joseph you're going to be over my house. And according to your command all my people will do homage. Only in the throne I'll be greater than you.

I've set you over the land of Egypt. And he took a signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand. To me that was a picture of Jesus anointing me.

And this is the word that came to my heart. Very strongly at that time. Pharaoh said to Joseph, amazing statement in verse 44, Joseph without your permission no one will be able to raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

And the Lord said to me, you go out there and preach and without my permission no one will be able to point a finger at you or raise a tongue or speak against you. I said wow. So if that fellow stands there and makes fun of me, it's because my father in heaven has permitted him to make fun of me.

Oh then it's alright. And that really gave me boldness, tremendous boldness. And another similar passage I found in 2 Samuel.

You know if you guys don't study the Old Testament you're missing out on wonderful promises. And if you don't read the Bible sometimes you're in a difficult situation. The answer is in the Bible but you don't know where it is and you live in confusion and you can waste your life.

I tell you I've been a believer now for 60 years. I was born again in 1959, July. And all these 60 years I've found in every situation there's an answer in the word of God.

But because I studied it I knew where it was. Even when God called me out to full time Christian work in May 1964, it was through the scriptures. All the guidance of my life was through the scriptures.

When I was praying about my marriage, God led me through the scriptures, gave me a confirmation about the person I was to marry. All through my life the word of God has guided me. Like the psalmist says, thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

That means it's like the street lights and also it's like a torch light. Where there are no street lights I've got a torch light. The word of God is always there.

A torch light and a street light. I can see up to a certain distance but I also got a torch light for the nearby snakes and scorpions that are in the way. Thy word, thy word have I treasured in my heart that I might never sin against you is also in Psalm 119.

There's amazing verses about promises about God's word in Psalm 119 and also Psalm 1. If you meditate on the law of the Lord day and night, you know what, if you meditate on God's word day and night, the promise in Psalm 1 is, listen to this, whatever you do will prosper. You want that promise from God? Whatever you do will prosper. I don't mean preaching alone.

I was working in a ship in the Navy and I said, Lord, whatever I do in this ship must prosper. It was all naval things I had to do on that ship but everything I did went right because I had to spend my time studying, meditating on God's word and at the end of one year the commanding officer has to write an annual report about me and he would call me and say, Lieutenant Poonen, I have nothing against you. You've done your work perfectly and I recommend your job is done perfectly but you don't play cards with the others and you don't drink with all the others.

You don't dance with all the others. You're a very unsocial person. I said, sir, I have some convictions about those things as a Christian and I had that and you know, one of those commanding officers, when he was dying in a hospital, somebody who met him told him, he told that man that they were thinking about me because I was the only officer who reminded him of eternity and when you're on your deathbed, you begin to think of eternity and then you begin to think of those people who reminded you of eternity.

Those are the only people who can help you. Don't be ashamed to be a witness for Christ. So the other verse I got was in 2 Samuel when David was being chased out of his house by his son Absalom.

2 Samuel 16, you know the king before David was Saul and there was a relative of Saul who was very upset with David becoming king because he lost all his influence. His name was Shimei and we read in 2 Samuel 16, verse 5, when David was being chased out by his son, a man from the family of Saul, Shimei, came and cursed him continually. He threw stones at David.

This is a king. But because he was chucked out, Shimei was so happy and Shimei said in verse 7, get out, get out you man of bloodshed, worthless fellow. He was so bold now because he was so happy that David was kicked out.

And one of David's generals, verse 9, said to the king, why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go now and cut off his head with my sword and see what he says. Listen to this. The king says, what have I got to do with you, Osanzara? I won't let you do it.

Zeruiah was David's sister and Abishai was his sister's son. He was trying to protect his uncle. And David said, if he curses, it's because the lord has told him, curse David.

Then how can I say, why are you doing that? Do you have that faith that when somebody curses you, I mean David put it, the lord told him, I would say the lord permitted him. That's more accurate. In the Old Testament, some of these things, they didn't have light.

But the lord has permitted him to curse you, brother, sister. If the lord has permitted him, why are you getting upset about it? If the lord permitted somebody to send a stinking letter to you, don't get upset about it. Forgive him.

Don't have any grudge against him. Don't have any, do you believe in the sovereign control of God? Look what Pharaoh said, nobody can lift a hand or a foot without your permission, Joseph. And without the permission of Jesus, I saw in that naval base, nobody could lift a hand or a foot against me.

So I got boldness to stand right outside the naval base regularly for over a year, every week to stand outside in the streets and preach the gospel and people would make fun of me and call me the devil. And I got some wonderful privileges there to be part of the family of God. Because Jesus said, if they called the head of the house prince of devils, how much more they will call the members of his family.

I remember once when I was seeking to sing a chorus and share something in the church, I was in a small church. The lord said to me, it's easy to sing here, everybody will admire you starting a chorus. Are you willing to stand on the street and sing the same thing where people will make fun of you? I said, sure lord.

I will never say something in a church which I'm not willing to say on the street where people make fun of me. In the church people will admire me, oh what a great preacher. I'm willing to say the same thing out on the streets where people make fun of me.

I decided that when I was 24 years old and I'm thankful that the lord kept me that way that I would never be ashamed to proclaim the truth of God even where I'm made fun of, laughed at. And that's what helped me when we started CFC and a lot of people called us the devil and all types of names and we never hated anyone of them. We loved them no matter what they did to us, they cursed us, they troubled us or they wrote articles against us or took us to court.

It makes absolutely no difference. We said, lord we're going to love them. You have permitted, you have permitted them to raise their hand against me.

You have permitted them to speak against me. You have permitted them to take me to court. You have permitted them to write articles against me.

Who am I to say why do they do it? I will not say that. You know where I learned that from? The Bible. Genesis 41, 2 Samuel 16.

Look how your life can be changed just by a few little examples like this. Can you do that in the days to come? That's how Jesus was. When they crucified him on the cross or when they called him in 2 Samuel 12, when they called him Beelzebul.

You know what he said that tremendously blessed me that. He knew that without the father's permission they could not call him Beelzebul. Nobody could call me the devil without the father's permission.

Matthew chapter 12 it says when Jesus healed a sick person, all the people admired it but the Pharisees were jealous and they said in Matthew 12, 24, this man is casting out demons by the ruler of demons, Beelzebul. And Jesus could read their thoughts and what they were saying among themselves. What would you do if somebody turned around and said you're a son of the devil? You're doing your work in the devil's power.

Have you ever been called the devil? I've been called devil, son of a devil, spiritual terrorist and all types of names and I believe it's an honor to be part of Jesus' family. They called the head of the family Beelzebul. What bad names have they called you? Have they only called you good names as Christians? Maybe you're ashamed to proclaim Christ where he's unpopular.

That's why you proclaim Christ only where he's popular so everybody admires you. I want to proclaim Christ where he's unpopular. And what you saw yesterday in the birthday celebration is one part of it.

A little bit of appreciation. But a lot of my life has been opposition, criticism and many other things and I've accepted that just as happily as I accepted yesterday. It's just the same to me.

I prayed years ago, I said Lord I want to come to the place in my life where whether a person appreciates me or criticizes me it's the same. It'll be like water off a duck's back. It comes and flows off.

Somebody appreciates, somebody criticizes. Jesus was like that. You could say oh this is the son of David.

Oh this is the devil. It was the same to him. I said Lord I want to be like you.

You put me on a throne or you put me in a criminal court, it is the same. Not the slightest difference. Because without my father's permission, nobody can raise a hand or a foot or speak a word against me.

My dear brothers and sisters, we are going to face difficult times in this country in the days to come. A lot of anti-Christian forces coming up. Believe this, that nobody can put you in prison for the Lord's sake without his permission.

Nobody can take advantage of you. In government offices, perhaps some of those anti-Christian people may make life difficult for you or a boss in your factory or office may make life difficult for you because you're a Christian. Without the Father's permission it cannot happen.

If you are committed to the Lord, and if you're scared, do what I did. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit you'll be bold.

Anyway, when these people called Jesus the devil, you know what he said? Have you read this carefully? Read the Bible slowly and exactly. Matthew 12, 32. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven.

Did you read it carefully? What does it say? He didn't tell the Pharisees, you're forgiven. They were forgiven of course. But he said whoever, not only you Pharisees, whoever not spoke, speaks, that is for the next 2,000 years.

If anybody speaks a word against Jesus, I have forgiven you right now. There, 2,000 years ago, Jesus forgave all the people who spoke against him for the next 2,000 years. And that taught me something.

I said, Lord, I have to have a thing called future forgiveness. If somebody's going to speak against me next year, it's already forgiven, brother. Forgiven.

You cannot move me from a position of forgiven. Why? Because I have been forgiven so much. I've been forgiven so much in my life.

I should have been in hell today. I am not exaggerating. I should have been in hell.

Sometimes I see myself in the days of my sinning and backsliding like a person rolling down a cliff. There's a picture I saw in my mind, rolling down a hill, and there's a steep cliff there. And I'm rolling, rolling, rolling, and defeated, defeated, frustrated, backslidden.

And just before I reached the edge of that cliff, the Lord caught me. That's why I'm here today. And I said, Lord, when you've been so merciful to me, you prevented me from going over the cliff into an eternal hell, how shall I treat other people who treat me badly? Forgiven, brother.

Forgiven, sister. Forgiven, forgiven, forgiven. Whatever you may call me, whatever you may do against me, did you pick my pocket and take my money? Forgiven.

Did you break into my house and take something? You couldn't find anything, but whatever you took, forgiven. You broke down the doors. Forgiven.

There is not a thing you can do against me, anybody in the world, that I will not forgive you. It's forgiven already. Whoever speaks against the Son of Man in the next 2,000 years is forgiven already.

Whoever speaks against Zacman until the end of his life is forgiven already. And whoever spoke against Zacman in the past is forgiven. Can you say that? Many of you say, I want to follow Jesus.

Follow him here. This is how we endure in love until the end. One of the major parts of love is forgiveness.

So don't just read that verse about enduring until the end in love until you begin with forgiveness. Forgiveness is the ABC. I want to forgive, I want to forgive, I want to keep on forgiving.

You know, we say, the Bible says in Ephesians 5, 1, I think, be imitators of God. Be imitators of God. We like to imitate God in doing miracles.

No, I have no desire to do miracles. But I'll tell you where I want to be an imitator of God. I know God can do miracles, but that's not where I want to imitate him.

The Bible says in Ephesians 5, 1, be imitators of God. Have you read that? Read the Bible slowly, exactly, and you will discover things which, you don't have to get it from me, you'll get it from the Holy Spirit. What does it say there? Read slowly, not be imitators of God.

What does it say? Read it. Therefore, and there's a little statement I'll say, whenever you see the word therefore in a sentence, see what it is there for. Got it? Whenever you see therefore in a sentence, see what it is there for.

That means go back to the previous verse. Where should I imitate God? Forgive one another as God as Christ has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God.

So where do I have to imitate God? In doing miracles? No. In preaching sermons? No. In forgiving.

How does God forgive? Now just imagine, for example, if you could go to heaven right now and see what God is doing. I'll tell you. Somewhere in Bangalore, somebody's committed a sin, God-fearing person saying, Lord, please forgive me, and the Lord's saying, forgiven.

In another corner of Bangalore, somebody else, some other believer is saying, I'm slipped up, Lord, forgive me, God's saying, forgiven. Some other part of Bombay, Delhi, different people are saying, Father, forgive me, and the Lord's saying, forgiven. Somebody in Africa is saying, Lord, forgive me, He's forgiven.

Somebody in the other side of the world, America, Pacific Islands, and Australia saying, Lord, forgive me. You know what God is doing 24 hours a day, every second. Millions of Christians, others praying to Him, forgive me, saying, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, yeah, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, yeah, forgiven there.

Be imitators of God. I want to be like that. I never want to stop.

I never want to stop. That is to be like Jesus. Whoever speaks a word against, put your name there, is already forgiven.

Sometimes I hear, somebody tells me, Brother Zach, somebody wrote something against you. Somebody said something against you. Somebody spoke against you there.

Somebody is trying, scheming something against you. I said, I don't know, I don't even know his name, but he's forgiven. What is the result of that? First of all, it makes me a very happy man.

Those who don't forgive are miserable. They don't sleep properly at night. They have bitterness in their heart against somebody who did something wrong to them.

That guy has already ruined your life by doing something wrong against you. And now he's ruining your life even more by preventing you from sleeping, making you think about him. What a fantastic work he has done.

He has done a double job. The devil has killed two birds with one stone. With one stone, he hit that fellow.

Speak against him. And then he hits you by keeping a bitterness against him and you don't sleep properly at night. And you keep on thinking, what shall I do? What shall I do that fellow? He did so much to me.

Two birds with one stone. What a clever fellow. Make a fool of the devil and say, you're not going to fool me anymore.

I'll tell you, in my stupid younger days, because I never had a spiritual father to guide me, I also got knocked down by the devil and somebody did something against me, but never again. Since many years now, I can honestly say before God, I've got zero bitterness in my heart against anyone who's done anything against me. All the people who have done things against me, I have named them and said, Lord, I pray you will bless them.

I pray you will bless their families. I pray you will prosper them. I pray it will go well with them.

And I've even said this, Lord, if you will give me the opportunity to do some good to them, give me that opportunity. I'll go and do some good to them who have harmed me so that they will know that I have forgiven them. That's why I sleep peacefully at night.

I'll tell you, believe me, my sleep is never disturbed by thinking of a single human being who has harmed me or hurt me or who can possibly hurt me. You get disturbed by sleep like that? Some brother-in-law who cheated you of your property? Can you imagine believers being worried about that? Some brother-in-law

cheated you, some share should have come to your wife, it never came. Praise the Lord.

God can make up for it. Let me give you another verse. Wonderful things from the Old Testament.

If you know where to find it, you find it just because I show it to you. Some of them you can find out by yourself if you read the scriptures. This is in 2 Chronicles chapter 25.

You know, some of you wonder why I ask your name so many times. I don't have a very good memory. They say, Brother Zak, I've already met you 10 times.

I say, fine, I may ask you another 10 times because I'm getting old and the doctors say, this is the truth, the doctors say that so many hundreds of brain cells die every day, yours and mine. After the age of 25, brain cells start dying and I'm 80. And the memory is like a hard disk.

You know what a hard disk is in the computer, where all the data is stored? The brain is like a hard disk with a lot of data about somebody tells me his name, it stays there. Some other thing happens, it stays there. But then the hard disk gets full.

Then what do you do? So the hard disk has to push out certain unimportant information and the hard disk is getting smaller because the cells are dying. So what I prayed is, Lord, just keep scripture in the hard disk. I don't care if somebody gets offended that I asked his name 10 times.

That's okay, it's not serious. But don't let me forget scripture. Even if I sometimes forget a reference, at least let me know whether it's on the left side of the page that verse comes or the right side of the Bible.

And it's easy, at least I can find it. Sometimes I can't know a reference, but I know it's somewhere. It's in just chapters 23, 24, or 25, but I know it's on the left side of the page.

Okay, I find it. So I purposely prayed, Lord, all the evil that has done to me, all that must be removed from my hard disk. Secondly, all the good that I have done to other people, that also please wipe out from the hard disk, it's not important.

The evil that other people have done and the good that I have done must all be wiped out from the hard disk. The good that other people have done, let me remember it. And the evil that I have done, please let me remember that also, so that I can humble myself, and especially scripture.

So I'm thankful that the Lord is answering my prayer. 2 Chronicles chapter 25. God will answer that for you as well, if you pray that prayer seriously.

If you say, Lord, I want to forgive everyone who has hurt me. I want to bless them. I want to do good to them.

Please give me an opportunity. 2 Chronicles 25. You know, the Kingdom of Israel was divided in the days of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, into two nations.

Ten tribes called Israel, two tribes called Judah. It became two kingdoms. And Chronicles is mostly about the history of Judah.

And there was a king called, the northern kingdom, ten tribes went into idolatry. The southern kingdom of Judah was a little more faithful. Amaziah, 2 Chronicles 25, was the king of Judah, reigned in Jerusalem.

And when the enemy came to fight against Judah, he said, we don't have enough soldiers. So let's get some more soldiers from Israel, because Judah not enough people. So in Judah and Benjamin, those are the two tribes in the south, verse 5, there was 300,000 people above the age of 20 who could fight.

And then he said, that's not enough. So he went to Israel and hired, verse 6, 100,000 Israelites also. That means he paid them money.

A hundred talents of silver means a huge millions and millions of rupees. He paid them, let's say a hundred million rupees to come and fight for us. And a man of God came to the king.

Thank God for these prophets who were not afraid of kings to speak the truth. And said, oh king, don't let those 100,000 people join your army because they are all idolaters. They are worship idols.

If you take them into your army, your army will be corrupt. And God will not be with your army. And God will bring you down in the battle, verse 8. And Amaziah said, but what about the hundred million rupees I've given? They're not going to give it back.

We already paid them. And listen to the answer of this. In the last 50 years, the Lord has spoken that sentence to my heart in many situations.

When people have cheated me, robbed me, taken things from me, taken advantage of me in the church, outside the church, the Lord can give you much more than this. That's been a word to my heart. Take it as a word to your heart.

When you forgive people, when you don't chase after them for their money, the Lord can give you much more than this. I've taken it many times and I can testify today after 50 years, in every situation, the Lord has given me much more when I forgive, when I release them. It's a wonderful thing to know the word.

When I was talking about Jesus looking at the crowds of people, Matthew 9, come back there. He had compassion on them, verse 36, because they were like sheep, distressed, dispirited, running around not knowing what to do. Sheep without a shepherd, harassed, thrown down, beaten, defeated.

I look around at so many believers. We get hundreds of emails regularly from all those who watch our 1,000 YouTube messages from around the world. Poor, needy people write to us.

Broken marriages. Many young believers, men, enslaved to masturbation and sexual sins. Ashamed and afraid to speak to their pastors, but they can write to us because email is anonymous.

You don't know who they are. Struggling. What shall I do, Brother Zach? Please help me.

And I praise God for wonderful co-workers I have. I can't handle all of that myself, who give appropriate answers to all these people who are needy. Distressed, beaten down is exactly the same today.

Sheep without a shepherd. Many of them say that. Brother Zach, it's no use going to my pastor.

They don't guide us aright. They're only interested in my money. They'll go to the rich people.

They won't go to the poor. Please guide us. Some people even pray, will you pray that I'll have a child? We've been married so many years.

Can you pray for a child? We do that. We've had some remarkable answers to prayer and many, many families have had children in answer to prayer because God loves them. Sheep without a shepherd.

And Jesus said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the shepherds are few. Yeah, when he said workers, he's talking in context of verse 36. The shepherds are few.

The preachers are many. The prosperity preachers are many, who will fool people saying if you give money to the Lord, he'll give money back to you, as if he's a bank giving 100% interest a year. No, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

And so many people today are being fooled by preachers who say you give to God, he'll give to you and some people borrow money to give to God thinking that then I'll be healed and they end up with their sickness and with the debt. Oh, I feel like taking a whip and chasing out these preachers out of Christendom who exploit these poor people. I've seen some of these Christian TV programs where this man in a pictures of the jet plane he travels in.

And I see the people sitting in the congregation, poor people. I can see by their expressions who they are and poor people and he's collecting money from them. I really get mad.

It says Jesus was angry when he saw these people making money in the name of religion in his day, sheep without a shepherd. And these poor people don't have any teacher to guide them saying this is false. God will provide your need.

So I'm so thankful. I'm so thankful for the internet. I'm so thankful for email that we can immediately give a reply to these people and help them in some way to help them.

But I say today, even today, the shepherds are few. So what should you do? Run out and do something? No, no, no, no. Pray, pray, pray, pray.

Whenever there is a need, Jesus didn't say go and do something. He said, pray to the Lord of the harvest, verse 38, that he will send out workers. If you go out without the Lord sending you, you can cause confusion.

Imagine when they were constructing this building and the architect has designed it in a certain way, the mason is putting the bricks and the concrete and the pillars and all this. Somebody says, hey, I want to come and help and comes and put some bricks here and there and put some steel rods here and there. The mason will say, get out of here, man.

You're causing more confusion. You listen to me if you want, then I'll give you some work. But if you yourself volunteer to come and put a brick here and a steel pillar here, you'll never allow us to finish this work.

This is what's happening in Christendom today. Without God sending somebody, they are just going out and trying to do something for the Lord. Pray that the Lord will send out shepherds into his harvest.

And God is my witness that I prayed for that. Say, Lord, we need shepherds. That's one reason we have some amazing shepherds in all of our churches, at least in most of our churches, who never take a salary sent out by the Lord in answer to prayer.

And that's why in all these 45 years, we've never had a single divorce in any of our churches, not even one. God's been good to us. We stand strongly against it.

And we praise the Lord. In this connection, I want you to see Jeremiah chapter 3. In Jeremiah chapter 3, we read, there's a beautiful verse here, which you must never forget. Two or three beautiful verses.

Jeremiah chapter 3. Let me start at verse 12. Go and proclaim these words toward the north. Return, O sinful, faithless Israel, for the Lord says to sinners today, return to me.

I will not look upon you in anger. Can you, anybody here who's very condemned about his own sinful past, please listen to these words of the Lord to you. Return to me, my son, my daughter.

I will not look upon you in anger, says the Lord. Can you hear that word from the Lord today? I'm saying to you, thus said the Lord to you, my brother, sister. The Lord says, I will not look upon you in anger, no matter what you have done.

You have been faithless. That's what it says here. You're a faithless person.

But I will not look upon you in anger. The reason was you didn't have any proper shepherd. I'm gracious.

And even if I was angry with you in the past, I will not be angry forever. But do one thing. Do only one thing.

Verse 13, only acknowledge your sin. That's all. You can't get rid of it.

Maybe you're still enslaved to some habit, but acknowledge it as a sin. Call it a sin. Don't call it by some other name.

Call it a sin. And acknowledge that you have sinned against the Lord. And you have been a spiritual harlot.

The devotion that you should have given to the Lord, you have scattered to the world and other people. And acknowledge that you have not obeyed my voice, verse 13. Just acknowledge it.

Then return to me, O you faithless sons and daughters. Now listen to his promise. I'm going to be your master, verse 14.

And I'm going to take you one from a city, two from a family. Not everybody, because everybody does not return. But one from here, one from there.

Maybe you're the only one in your home whom the Lord pulled out. Maybe you're only two or three in your town or city whom the Lord pulled out. One from here, one from there.

He doesn't bring crowds. He picks up individually. One here, one there, one there.

That's how he's built this congregation. We have not had big crusades where we ask people to come sign decision cards and say 10,000 people accepted Christ. We have never done that.

Our churches have grown by one from here and one from there and one from a family here and one from a village there. That's how our churches have grown. Exactly like it says here.

And I will bring you to the new covenant church. Zion is a title for the new covenant church. I'll pick you one from here.

All you faithless people, will you acknowledge your iniquity? That's all I want. Acknowledge your sin. Acknowledge that you have sinned against God and you have not obeyed God.

Acknowledge it and I'll forgive you, the Lord says. Come to me. I'll take you one from here, one from there.

Maybe only one from your whole family. And I'll bring you to a new covenant church, to Zion. And how will you know? This is a new covenant church.

Here is the answer in the next verse. You will find there, shepherds who have got God's own heart. When you have found a shepherd, a spiritual leader, who's got the heart of God towards you, compassion, not desiring to attach you to himself, but to attach you to Christ.

Not desiring any money from you, not desiring any honor from you, not desiring anything from you, but wanting to serve you, serve you, serve you, serve you, till the end of his life. You have found a shepherd after God's own heart. Because that's how it says about Jesus in John 13, one, having loved his own.

You read that verse? He loved them until the end, even unto the cross. That's a shepherd after God's own heart, who will lay down his life for you, who will be willing to lose his health, because he loves you. Why should he do it? You're not related to him.

Shepherds after God's own heart, who will sacrifice time they could have spent with their family, to spend time with you. Do you know that a true shepherd, and we have some in our churches, time they could have spent with their own family, they sacrifice it. You think the family doesn't want the father to be at home? They've sacrificed it for you.

We have a number like that. And because of that, God has blessed their children. Their children don't suffer because of that.

Oh no. God will honor those who honor him. But that is a shepherd after God's own heart, because God's heart is like that.

God so loved the world that he gave his son, and that heart he gives to shepherds, that they will care for you. That is the mark of a new covenant church. And if you have not found a shepherd or an elder like that, you are not in a new covenant church.

Even if it calls itself a CFC church, that is not a new covenant church. Not every elder in a CFC church is a man after God's own heart. Not at all.

I know it very well. I know some of them seek their own. Paul said that about his co-workers.

I have a few like Timothy, but many seek their own. I say the same thing about CFC elders. There are some wonderful godly men, you've heard some of them in these days, but there are others who are just, have the CFC label.

I am a CFC elder. Garbage. Garbage.

God doesn't care for that label. What's your heart like? Are you a man after God's own heart, willing to lay down your life for the flock? Otherwise, you're not a shepherd after God's own heart, and whatever church you build, you can call it CFC or any C, but it will not be a church after God's own heart. It will not be a new covenant church.

Yeah, I'm sorry to say there are some CFC elders like that. It's not new. In the first century, read what the elder in Ephesus was like.

Read Revelation chapter 2, chapter 3. Five out of the seven churches called themselves new covenant churches, but five of the elders were so bad that the Lord said, you're one of them. He said, you're blind and you're useless. You think you're a great anointed person, but you're worthless.

You have a name that you're alive, but you're dead. That is first century church, planted by the apostles. They couldn't always get God-fearing elders.

Some of them started well. You read in the third episode of John, there was an elder whom John appointed called Diatrophes, but after he built up a congregation, he forgot all about John. He said, I don't care about John.

I am the leader here, and if John sent somebody to visit that church, he said, get out. I'm not listening to you. And John says, really? I will come there and I will teach him a lesson.

You read the third John. Oh, these apostles had authority. They had authority.

God gave them authority even to take a person and hand him over to Satan. It's tremendous, the authority God gives to his servants, I'll tell you. Scary.

But Diatrophes didn't care for all the people whom John sent, but John said, I'll come and teach him a lesson, and I'm sure Diatrophes was scared of that. But it's a sad thing that there are not sufficient shepherds, and Jesus looks out today as compassion on the people of India. And it's the same thing.

He says, I want shepherds after my own heart, people who will love their flock until the end. Turn with me to John chapter 13, and we will close there. John chapter 13, enduring in love until the end, brother or elder or shepherd or whatever, whatever you are, husband, endure in life, love for your wife until the end, no matter how bad your wife is.

Wife, endure in love to your husband until the end, no matter how bad your husband is. And take John 13.1 as your example. Before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour had come, that he would depart out of the world to the Father, having loved his, listen to this, having loved his own which are in the world, he loved them until the end.

This is on the night of the Last Supper. He knew that in a few hours, they will all leave him in the garden of Gethsemane and run away to save their own lives. Nobody would stand by him.

He knew that. He knew that even the three people he was very close to and asked to pray with them, they would go to sleep instead of praying with him. He knew that.

And he knew that one of them was going to betray him, but he loved them until the end. That's amazing. And I say, Lord, that's my example.

I may be surrounded by people who betray me, who will not take time to pray with me, and who may run away when I'm in trouble, they may run away and take care of themselves, but I will still love them until the end. Can you say that? Please take that as a verse for you wives who have difficult husbands, you husbands who've got difficult wives, you fathers who've got difficult children, love them until the end. Be firm with them.

Let your love be a love that is firm, not wishy-washy. Oh son, you can do what you like. Oh daughter, you can dress as you like.

No, you cannot dress as you like as long as you're in my house. Children don't have wisdom. To tell you, I would say that to my children.

In this house, I'm the boss. When they were small. You can't play any music you like.

Some of your friends in school give you some music, you can't play it here. This house, Jesus Christ is Lord. We don't watch any movies here which Christ will not sit with us and watch.

We will not play any rock music or any of that rubbish in this house. We love Jesus. And we love you until the end.

That's why we are firm in our love towards you, our children. Love your family members until the end. There's enough hatred in the world, darkness.

Let a light shine in your home. There's enough darkness in Christendom. You know, a lot of people come to our church nowadays.

It concerns me because I see that they're not wanting to be disciples. You ask them, why have you come here brother? Oh brother, that other church, they only ask us for our money, money, money, money, money. Here we come, nobody asks us for money.

Oh, is that why you've come? Or some people say, the children here, we like, we want our children to grow up with these nice children. Is that why you've come? You want to be a disciple of Jesus or you're concerned to be in a nice atmosphere for your children? You're looking for a school or what? There are different reasons with which people come. And the others say, I think there are some God-fearing sisters here.

We'd like some good marriage partners for our sons. And these boys will come and act very spiritual for two or three months, but our elders are sharp. They are not fooled.

Thank God. They have enough years of experience to see through all these humbugs who come and act spiritual for two or three months to marry some sister here. They know that we have high standards.

I got a letter from some unknown person who's from some Pentecostal church about 70 kilometers away from here, who wrote to me, Brother Zach, I'm a young man, I want to get married, I'm born again. I'll marry any sister from your church. I say, wow, what a testimony.

I say, I will not give any sister to you. These are my daughters and I will not give my daughter to anyone who says, I'll marry any sister. You want a submissive wife, right? Who will just say, yes, sir, yes, sir, to you.

No, we are training women to be disciples of Jesus Christ, who will love Christ more than you. You want a wife like that? Who will say to you, my darling husband, I love Christ more than I love you. And all my life, I love Christ more than I love you.

You sisters learn that to say that to your husbands from day one. And if he says, then get out, don't marry him. God will give you somebody better.

I said that to my wife before I married. I said, you'll never be first in my life. We are married 51 years.

She's not first in my life. She never will be. That's why we don't fight.

That's why we are happy together, more happy than we ever were. That's why our home is a foretaste of heaven. And that's why our children have grown up to love the Lord, because Christ is first.

Remember that. Not church. Church comes after family, but Christ is first.

So Jesus loved until the end. And we want to love until the end. I pray that many of you young brothers will be faithful in studying the Word.

When I started studying the Word, when I was 20 years old, I never knew that one day God would make me a shepherd. Or what God would give me responsibly to teach, or responsibly or elders. I never knew that.

I only knew that I wanted to know Jesus better. And to know Jesus better, I studied the Word of God. And little by little, I got to know Jesus better.

Start with studying the Word of God. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. God's got amazing plans for your life.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, please help us to honor you. I pray that in this church, in all our churches in India, and the other countries you have raised up CFC churches, please give us God-fearing shepherds.

After your own heart, we pray. You told us to pray that God will thrust forth such shepherds. We need such shepherds, Lord.

We need apostles in India. We need prophets. We need evangelists.

We need shepherds. We need teachers in India. Please raise up such people in the days to come.

From the young people here, and from the young people in our churches in many languages, raise up such people in the days to come. For the older generation is passing on. Please, Lord, raise up another generation that will be faithful, and even more faithful than the older generation has been.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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