

Maximum Christians and Minimum Christians

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a radical, wholehearted life for Christ, exercising our will to forgive and choose not to remember, and understanding the depth of Jesus' agony on the cross.

Duration: 59:08

Scripture: Psalm 139:23

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Surrender"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding forgiveness and the impossibility of forgetting past wrongs done to us. It delves into the concept of God choosing not to remember our sins, highlighting the need for us to exercise our will to choose not to dwell on past hurts. The speaker encourages a focus on surrendering our will to God, forgiving others, and experiencing the depth of Jesus' sacrifice, leading to a life of sacrificial love and service for God and His people.

Transcript

There's one thing I need to clarify, which I find I always need to, in relation to forgiving others which we spoke of in our last session. I've heard preachers say, when you forgive someone, you must forget what they did against you. I'd say that such a preacher is a hypocrite and a liar, because forgetting what other people have done against us is impossible.

I told you that God himself doesn't forget. He chooses not to remember. That's what Hebrews 8.12 says.

And so my attitude towards someone who has done wrong to me is, I cannot forget, because I have no control over my memory. I have control over my will. That's all.

And I choose not to remember when I meet him or I think of him or deal with him. So you should not torture yourself by saying, oh, I remember that. What can I do about it? Well, you'll always remember it all your life.

It doesn't make a difference. Because God does not test us by our memory. You see, if you understand what I said in the beginning of body, soul, and spirit, the outer court, the holy place, and the most holy place, the soul represented by the holy place is the mind, the memory, emotions, feelings.

You may have feelings. It doesn't make a difference. Where does your will lie? That going through the veil is saying, Lord, my will is exercised in your side, and I forgive that person.

I can't do anything about my memory. I can't do anything about my feelings. I don't live by my feelings.

It's just like feelings can come when of sorrow. But in the midst of sorrow, it says you can have a joy in your heart. So please keep that in mind so that the devil doesn't condemn you and torture you by saying you haven't forgotten that.

When I tell the devil, I'll never forget it. But I have no condemnation because of that. Because God doesn't look at my memory.

He doesn't look at my feelings. Where is my will exercised? My will is always exercised in favor of doing God's will. So as I was thinking further about this matter of being ready to meet the Lord, there are these two categories of believers.

Some are eager to meet the Lord and some who are not so eager and who shrink away in shame. And we wonder why. I think one of the reasons is when we see Jesus face to face, even when he comes in the sky, one of the things that amazes us and surprises us is the extent of his love for us and the greatness of the sacrifice he made for us.

I mean, we all know Christ died for my sins. And we probably wept when we seen movies of Jesus being crucified. But I'm not talking about just that.

One day we will discover that the greatest suffering Jesus went through was not the physical death on the cross, but the three hours on the cross when God the Father had actually forsaken him and what he experienced as an infinite being was eternal hell in those three hours. Many of us have probably never thought about that. I never thought about it myself for many, many years until God opened my eyes to see that the punishment for my sin was not physical death.

And if Jesus only physically died for me, then the punishment for my sin has not been paid till today. That's what God opened my eyes to see. Every believer will say the punishment for sin is eternal hell.

So did Jesus pay that price or not? The punishment for my sin is only physical death and I can pay that price myself. I die, I pay the price. So if we only think of Jesus dying on the cross physically, I have to say he didn't pay the price for my sin.

Because that is not the price for my sin. The price for my sin is eternal separation from God. It's very clear in scripture.

God is holy. He cannot tolerate sin. And if I have sinned, eternal separation from God is the price for it.

And if that price has to be paid, somebody has to pay that price of eternal separation from God. That's why no created being could pay that price. You know like the Jehovah's Witnesses say, Jesus was a man or the highest of created beings.

Well, sorry. Then your sins are not forgiven. Because no created being can suffer eternal separation in three hours.

The only way a created being can suffer eternal separation from God is by being actually eternally separated for all eternity in hell. And anyone else who lowers Jesus from the position of equality with the Father, I'd say your sins are not forgiven. I'll tell him straight.

Because the punishment for your sin is eternal separation from God. And the Jesus you believe in is not God. So he cannot suffer eternal separation.

But what Jesus experienced, because Jesus is an infinite being, and the only infinite being in the universe is God himself. And if Jesus was not God, he did not pay the price for my sin. I hope you understand that.

That because he was infinite, God did not pay the price. He could experience eternity even in one second. Time is no factor for an infinite person.

For a finite being like me, I need to actually experience eternity to be eternally separated, forsaken by God. Many people think of hell as fire and worms and all that. Those are all pictures.

The real agony of hell is that you're cut off from God and forsaken by him completely. It's pictured as fire and worms and all. Actually, it's much worse than fire and worms.

Fire and worms would be nothing compared to being forsaken by God. Jesus used word pictures. It's like mansions in heaven, crowns in heaven.

We're not going to go around with crowns in heaven. These are all word pictures because those are the things that are valuable on earth. Jesus used pictures because it's very difficult for us to describe, for us to understand how heaven is going to be like, how hell is going to be like.

But the more closer we get to God, we realize that the punishment for sin is not fire and worms. It's eternal separation from God of forsaking by God. That's what Jesus experienced for three hours on the cross.

That's the only time in his life where he did not call him father because during those three hours, he was not standing before his father. He was standing before the judge of all the universe because he was a sinner at that moment. Not his own sin, my sin, your sin.

That's why it says in 2 Corinthians 5.21 that God made him to be sin who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Many people have not meditated enough on the cross to understand the depth of what Jesus went through. That's one of the big things that will amaze us when we see him face to face and our minds suddenly become clear with the light of eternity in heaven.

We'll say, wow, Lord did you actually go through that for me? I'm thankful that God opened my eyes to see a little bit of that here on this earth. The first time I saw it, I wept like anything and I realized that Jesus didn't just die for me on the cross. The nails and the whipping and the crown of thorns was nothing compared to that agony which he experienced of being cut off from his father for three hours and just for my sake.

That was the cup he did not want to drink that he struggled with but he drank it for my sake. And then at the end, he was once again restored because his last words were not my God, my God. His last words were it is finished and father, once again it was father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

That proves to me my sins are forgiven. He called him my God, three hours later he could say it's finished, my father. That's the mystery of the cross and God's given us minds to understand that.

It's a wonderful thing to know it and when we see it, we'll be so gripped by it and this is why it says about heaven that the folks in heaven sing a new song, Revelation and chapter 5. It says in Revelation 5 that all the elders and others in heaven, Revelation 5, 9, they sang a new song saying, thou art my God, my God.

Thou art worthy to break the seals because thou was slain and thou didst purchase for God with thy blood. Men from every tribe, we can say you purchased me with your blood.

You're worthy. But for many years that I read this verse, I never understood how it could be a new song. It's not a new song.

I mean I've heard for many years that Christ died for my sins and in heaven they've heard it for ages. How in the world is it a new song? Jesus died on the cross, shed his blood, is that a new song? But as I meditated on it, I understood that it was something new means ever fresh, ever fresh. Once I understood that, I prayed a prayer a few years ago.

I said, Lord, I never, please help me by your Holy Spirit that I will never think or speak about the cross or sing about the cross without being moved in such a way as if I'm hearing it for the first time, ever fresh. It's as if these people are hearing for the first time, wow, Jesus is willing to take the sin of the world and die and be forsaken. I'll tell you honestly, I had lost the wonder of that.

For years and years and years as a born again Christian, I could sing glibly about the cross because I'd lost the wonder of it. But God opened my eyes and said, Lord, just to see that it need not be like that. The Holy Spirit can make the cross of Jesus fresh to see it as if I'm hearing it for the first time, as if I'm knowing for the first time that I don't have to be in jail.

I don't have to go to hell. I've been released. He took my punishment.

I pray it will never be stale news for me. I fear it is stale news for many, many believers and probably for most of you. And that's the reason why our Christian life is also so shallow.

Because the Bible says in 1 John 4, we love him because he first loved us. In other words, the reason I love him is because he first loved me. If I feel he loved me just this little bit, I will love him this little bit.

But the more I understand the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of Christ, the more I will love him. If you wonder why you don't love him as you should, if you wonder why you lose your first love and so often go into sin, a person who's lost his first love, one of the clearest proofs of it is that he can sin so lightly. He can get angry so lightly.

He can have dirty thoughts so lightly. He's lost his first love. Why is that? Because he hasn't seen the cross of Christ, how much Jesus loved him.

He's not eager to find out God's love. He's not eager to find out the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of Christ. These are just words he reads and they're all intellectual and he's not really longing.

And you know, I'll tell you something, God says, you will look for me and find me only when you search for me with all your heart. If you're just one of those people who just goes to church and sings songs and wants a little more information from the Bible, something to tickle your mind and stir you up a little bit for a little while, you'll never get here. But if you're serious, if you're a serious Christian and you really want to follow Jesus and you want the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to see more and more of the glory of Jesus, you'll want to see what is the depth of his agony on the cross.

I wanted it. And little by little, I mean, I must say, I never knew it for more than 20 years of my Christian life. And I would not have known it if I was not eager to find out.

And then I began to pray, as I said, Lord, I never want to sing about the cross without being deeply moved. And it's very difficult for me now to sing about the cross without being moved in my heart and very often with tears in my eyes. And you wonder, is that the first time you're hearing it? Yes, it is.

In one sense, it's ever fresh. And if you can sing about the cross, my brother, just as a nice tune to shake your hips and shake your head and sing that Jesus died for you and rose up. What can I say? I only feel sorry for you.

You have not understood the love of Christ. You know the theory. You can explain it even to an unbeliever.

But it doesn't move you. It doesn't stir you. It's not fresh.

It's an old tale that you heard years ago. It doesn't move you anymore. It's really sad.

And I can only say one thing. You have left your first love. Think of the first time you ever heard and understood that you don't have to go to hell.

Your sins are forgiven. You remember a time way back when you really were thankful to Jesus for having died for you? Why has it become stale? It became stale for me, I'll tell you. It was something glimpsed.

And I could just talk about it lightly, but no longer. And I pray that it will never be an old tale for me. I'll be, I want more and more of that spirit of heaven where it's ever fresh.

And they sang an ever fresh song. He died for me. He shed his blood and purchased me.

He was slain for one. Like we sang in that song that, even when we were singing that song, it really moved me that I could hear my voice among the scoffers. Did that sentence move you when we sang that song? Lord, I'm ashamed.

I hear my voice among the scoffers. That means I hear me crying out, crucify him. Get rid of him.

We don't want him. We want Barabbas. Kill him.

I hear my voice. Have you ever heard your voice there? Have you ever seen yourself hammering the nail into Jesus' hands? I have. Me.

Hammering the nails into his hand and crying out, crucify him. And then I see that he says, son, I'm dying for you. For those sins you wanted to crucify me.

I'm dying to save you from that. I want to live in that all my life. Every single day.

And I want the reality of that to be more and more real to me. And I know that if I'm like that, I'll have very little of a surprise when Christ comes again. I'll be eager to meet him.

I will not shrink away from shame. And it will produce certain results in my life. I will become what I call a maximum Christian and not a minimum Christian.

If God were to come into a church, even in this one, he will draw the line not just between those who believe and those who don't believe, but between the maximum Christians and the minimum Christians. And you need to ask yourself which side of the line will you be. I'm not here to judge you, but you need to ask yourself.

The minimum Christian is the one whose attitude is, what is the minimum I have to do to get into God's kingdom? What is the minimum I have to do? Say sorry for my sins? Is that it? And believe and say Lord Jesus come into my heart? That's it? What is the minimum? What's the minimum I have to do to be a member in good standing in RLCF? Let me figure that out. The elders tell me what is the minimum I have to do to be a member in good standing here? I'm going to do it. Because I don't want to miss out on this wonderful church which is such a family.

But I want to do the minimum necessary to always be accepted as a member here. You don't have a clue about what Jesus did for you. I'll tell you that honestly.

You're a minimum Christian. Always what is the minimum amount of money I have to give to God to keep in good standing? What is the minimum I have to do? What is the minimum I have to do to get involved with the activities in the church? The maximum Christian is very different. His attitude is, Lord I've got only one life.

What is the maximum I can do for you before I leave this earth to show my gratitude to you for all that you did for me on the cross? I don't want to get up in heaven and discover how much you loved me and how much you sacrificed for me and then wish, oh I wish I could live my life again. That wish will never be granted. You have only one life to live.

And if you want to show your gratitude, this is the only life you have. And days have already slipped by in your life since you got converted. How many days have slipped by in your life since the day you were born again? All those days are lost.

You can't show your gratitude. You can't go back to those days. But there are still days ahead of us and we can show our gratitude to the Lord now in the days to come for what he did for us.

And the maximum Christian is always one who thinks, I haven't done enough. I haven't done enough for the Lord or for his body, the church. I'm always challenged by this verse in Ephesians 5. For me, in my service for the church, anywhere, this is the verse that guides me.

Ephesians 5, verse 25. It says Christ loved the church. The last part of that verse, I'm not talking about husband and wife now.

Verse 25, the second half of it. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. And I want it to be written at the end of my life when the Lord writes it, not human beings, that I love the church and gave myself up completely for the church.

Are you one of those? Or are you just doing the minimum to be accepted as a member of good standing in this church? Then I would say you haven't understood the love of Christ. And probably you're not even eager to understand the love of Christ. You just want to know something in the Bible, some clever thing to share so that everybody will be impressed by how spiritual you are.

I'm not at all interested in, once upon a time when I was a young Christian, I was always interested in saying some clever thing to share. No longer, I'm willing to repeat the same message a hundred times if people will be gripped by it. I have no interest in sharing something new so that people will think, oh wow, that was something new Brother Zach shared.

Not interested. I'm interested in getting people to love Jesus with all their heart. And if I have to say something a hundred times to get them there, they'll do it.

That's how the Old Testament prophets were. If you read the Old Testament prophets, God gave them one message and they kept on preaching it. Hosea had one message, Isaiah had one message, Jeremiah had one.

They kept on preaching it. They were not interested in getting a name for themselves as preachers. They were interested in changing God's people.

And I'll tell you honestly, I've heard many preachers, but there are very few who are interested in changing God's people. Most preachers are interested in their own reputation and getting a name for themselves. Well, I don't believe such people love the Lord at all.

They love themselves. Christ loved the church and gave himself. He didn't come to earth to get a reputation.

No, he came to earth, he loved people so much he wanted to save them, pay whatever price necessary, loved the church and gave himself like that. And that is the type of person whom the Lord delights in. When I read the book of Malachi, it's a great book, Malachi.

I'll tell you why. Because it shows how God's people had degenerated through the years. Israel had degenerated through years and come to such a low level.

They may have been good in many external things, but they had become minimum type of Jews. And the Lord says, some of you are deceived by these people, but there is a small remnant in this church. There is a church within this church, and that church is a small remnant of those who are radical, wholehearted, for whom Christ is everything, and who will give themselves completely for him and his body, not for RLCF, for Christ and his body, and who will give everything, who are maximum, who will never feel that they have done enough, and who are always willing to pitch in and sacrifice and never seek their own for the sake of God's family, the church.

And there are others who have the attitude as, what is the minimum? They're like the passengers. They drift along, and they're more interested in looking prim and proper, and dress nicely, and look nice, and come there and get everybody's appreciation. There are others who are more interested in giving everything to build the church.

They say they've got only one life, and they won't have no regret when they stand before the Lord. Life is so short. Life is so short.

So here in Malachi, the Lord says, today you don't know who is a real servant of God and who isn't. Malachi chapter 3, today you really don't know who really fears God and reverences him and who doesn't. One day when Christ comes again, I mean you may think that you know who are the really spiritual ones here and all because they speak the right words and come along regularly to the meetings.

The Lord says you really don't know. It says in Malachi 3, in that day, then you will know. Those who fear the Lord spoke to one another and they heard it and a book of remembrance was written before him.

Not for those who wanted to go to heaven. That's another book. There's a book of life.

You don't want your name to be there? Great. You want to go to heaven. I want my name to be in this thing called the book of remembrance.

Is your name here? Or is it only in the book of life? A book of remembrance where the names were written, those who reverence the Lord and who esteem his name, who esteem his sacrifice, who esteem his love. That's another book. That's what I mean.

There's a book within a book. There's a book of remembrance within the book of life. There's a church within the church.

Now I want to be in that inner church. You see, when I, in our church in Bangalore, I don't have equal fellowship with everybody. I'll tell you honestly.

I have fellowship with very few. Deep fellowship. And the others, yeah, they're friends.

I don't hate them. But I don't have a lot of time to spend with them. I spend most of my time with a very small inner circle.

You can call it exclusiveness. You can call it cliques or anything. I'm following Jesus.

Jesus had a big circle of a multitude. He'd speak to them, teach them wonderful things. And I've got that big circle too.

Then he had an inner circle of 70 disciples. You read about in Luke chapter 10 whom he sent out. And I also have a group like that of those who I work with.

And then in the midst of that 70, he had another group of 11. And in that, he had another core group of three. I want to be in that.

I don't want to be in just that 11 or 70. I want to be in that group of three. And I say, Lord, what do I have to do to be in that group of three, that inner circle that's close to you? And I'll find some others who are also in that group.

And those are the ones, in every church, I find I fellowship with a few who are in that inner circle. And it may look like partiality. It would have looked like partiality when Jesus says, let me give you one example.

Okay, I'm going up to the Mount of Transfiguration. All nine of you disciples can stay here at the foot of the mountain. I'm going to take only three, Peter, James, and John.

And they had that wonderful experience of meeting Moses and Elijah. Don't you think the other disciples also would have enjoyed it? And they come back and tell the other disciples. Oh, maybe they were not allowed to talk about it.

Sorry. But anyway, the other disciples must have understood. These guys had some experience.

And they think, well, Jesus is so partial. He takes some. We're also disciples.

We also gave up our jobs to be part of him. You can accuse Jesus as much as you like about partiality. The fact is, he is partial to those who are wholehearted.

And the others remain in the outer circle. And they will always remain in the outer circle. And I want to say in every church I have seen this.

There are those who are these minimum Christians who will always be in the outer circle. And I have a feeling that some of them will end up in Babylon. Don't think that because we have left dead denominations and come here, we have come to Jerusalem.

No. I have seen through 42 years of building CFC churches that people with the spirit of Babylon can be right in the middle of a CFC church. I see that in India too.

I didn't understand that in the beginning. In the beginning, we had left all those dead churches. And we want to be wholehearted.

And we thought everybody who came along understood the principle of a new covenant church. And so many things we stand for. We don't have pastors.

We've got elders. We don't take offerings. And we preach victory over sin.

And they understood it all. But still, there was Babylon. And the spirit of Babylon is what is the minimum I have to do to be a part of this church.

Very different from that inner core. And Jesus had discernment. There's a great verse in John chapter 2, which says that Jesus did not need anyone.

Look at this word and examine yourself in the light of it. It's related to what I'm just saying. John 2, 24.

Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to them. To whom? Verse 23. In the middle.

Many believed in his name. For a Jew to believe in Jesus means he was becoming a Christian. Today, we say many believe in his name.

There are people who call themselves Christians. They believe in Jesus. It doesn't mean anything.

But in the time when Jesus was beginning his ministry, for Jews, even today, for a Jew to believe in the name of Jesus Christ is an amazing thing. It says many of those Jews believed in his name, but Jesus did not entrust, commit himself to them. And you say, Lord, you don't commit yourself to people who believe in your name? That's right.

Because he knew all men. And he doesn't need anyone to bear witness concerning man because he knew what was in each person. We've got to apply that verse to ourselves.

We're all, in verse 23, we believe in Jesus and we have come here. But let me say this, that Jesus looks at us and he doesn't entrust himself to all of us. And that's why you find so many problems in your Christian life.

You can't rejoice always. You're frequently discouraged and gloomy and so many things. Because Jesus hasn't entrusted himself to you.

You come to believe in him. And you're not really interested in being a wholehearted, maximum Christian who pays any price to follow him, for whom you'll go beyond the line of duty and do more. Beyond what is the minimum required.

Jesus knows that. He says he knows what is in man. Because that's not his spirit.

Jesus did not come to earth and say, Father, tell me what is the minimum I have to do for you on this earth and I'll come back to you. He did not come with that spirit. He came on earth and said, Father, all that I have is yours.

I'm not going in for any minimum business. Whatever you want, you can have it from me. Ask for it and I'll give it to you.

And I believe it's those who have that spirit whom the Lord understands. And we can't judge one another because, to tell you honestly, I know about 5% of your life. And you know 5% of my life.

How much do you know of my life? You don't know my thoughts. You don't know my attitudes. You don't know how I deal with money.

You don't know how I deal with people. You don't know how I talk to my wife at home when nobody is around. You don't know these things.

So what do you know about my life? I can testify wonderful things. But you know about 5% of my life. And I know 5% of yours.

So I can't judge you and you can't judge me. But the Lord knows everything that is in me, every detail of my life, every second of my life. And He knows every second of your life.

And He knows exactly what we are willing to do for Him. What price we are willing to pay. How much of our life we are really giving to Him.

And then He decides whether to entrust Himself to me. This is a strong word. He did not entrust Himself to them.

I remember as I meditated on that, I said, Lord, I've entrusted myself to you, I think. And maybe only partially that He doesn't entrust Himself to me. And that's why we read in Malachi, turn back to Malachi 3, there's a book of remembrance written for those who reverence God and who esteemed Him so much.

And the Lord says, Malachi 3, 17, in the day when I come back, these will be my jewels. These will be my special treasure. That's the word, my own possession.

And in that day, verse 18, last part, you will discover who really served God and who was only serving himself. Do you know there are many people who sit in the church who are only serving themselves. They want to go to heaven when they die.

They want to get a reward from Jesus when He comes back. They're serving themselves. I don't want to go to heaven when I die.

I'll tell you honestly. I don't want to get any reward from the Lord. I want to be with Jesus.

Period. I want to be with Jesus. Period.

For all eternity. It doesn't matter where He is. I don't want a mansion.

I don't want a crown. Nothing. Jesus is sufficient.

Because He's become precious to me. Because I see what He did for me on the cross. And I'm still discovering more and more, day by day, what He did for me on the cross.

And it's my life long study, the sacrifice Christ made for me. And like it says, when I discover how much He loved me, we love Him in return. And our love for Him will increase more and more if we discover more and more how much He loved me and sacrificed for me.

Love involves sacrifice. Remember that. If there's no sacrifice in your life, you don't love.

The Bible says, God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. No. God so loved the world that He made the greatest sacrifice that anyone could ever make.

He gave His own Son. And it's an absolutely shameful thing to Him. If I say, Lord, I respond in love to You by coming to church every Sunday, singing a few songs and putting a few currency notes in the offering box.

Is that all? That's my love for Him? What about beyond the call of duty? What about something beyond? What about my spare time? And what about that which involves sacrifice? You see, we've all got this attitude of, in the world it is like that. What is the minimum I have to do for others or for the Lord? The minimum. The minimum.

I've done that and I use it. Have I got a good reputation in the church? That I'm a very generous, good, humble person? Who cares for that reputation? I hope you don't. The important thing is what reputation have you before the Lord? The sacrifices you make, are you doing it to get honor for yourself or because you love Jesus so much it doesn't matter to you whether people see it or not, whether people appreciate it or not.

Jesus said that all our sacrifices must be in secret as far as possible. We don't do it for getting any appreciation from anyone. And if we want to have that attitude, I believe that we need to see two things for our love to God to increase.

One is to discover how much Jesus loved us. And the other thing we need revelation on is how great our sin is. I fear that's the second problem.

One problem is that we don't understand how much Jesus loved us. And the other thing is we don't understand how great our sin is. So if you were to ask God for revelation, don't ask God for revelation to say something clever in the meeting.

Forget that. Go and ask God to give you revelation on how much Jesus loved you. And go and ask God to give you revelation on how great a sinner you are.

Because that's the other way we love Him. Jesus said in Luke chapter 7, the one who is forgiven more, loves more. Luke 7.47. The one who loves little, the one who sacrifices little is the one who feels he has been forgiven little.

So there are two secrets of loving Jesus supremely. Only two. One is to discover how much He loved me.

That's the verse I quoted in 1 John and chapter 4. We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4.19. So if my love for Him is dependent on my understanding of how much He loved me, the more I understand that, the more I love Him. 1 John 4.19. The other is Luke chapter 7, verse 47.

He who is forgiven much, loves much. Now I believe that every one of us, you and I, have been forgiven much. But whether we are aware is another thing.

I have a feeling that most Christians, that could apply to a number of people here, feel they've been forgiven, but not so much. What is the proof of that? You love the Lord little and you love the church little. See, if somebody comes to me and says, Brother Zach, I love your head, but I don't love the rest of you.

I think there's something wrong with them. What do you mean you love my head, but you don't love the rest of me? Think if your wife told you that. I love your head, but I don't love the rest of you.

Or you told your husband that. That would be crazy. But that's exactly what we are saying.

Lord Jesus, I love you, but your body, the church, it's not so important. But that's his body. It is his body.

Many people haven't got their eyes open to see that. But Lord, they're not like you. They're so ungrateful.

It doesn't matter. You've been forgiven much. You've got to love them.

Jesus loved a body that was stinking with sin and gave everything to win it. When we talk about the Spirit of Christ, do I have the Spirit of Christ? People want the Holy Spirit. I've seen numerous people, oh, how I'd love to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire.

And because they've heard some Pentecostal testify, they got a thrill or a shake or some spoken tongues or something like that. Do you know what the Holy Spirit will do? Be careful before you ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit. I know what it did to me.

It made me sacrifice everything because that's the Spirit of Christ. You're asking God to fill you with the Spirit of Jesus Christ who sacrificed everything for the church. Who valued the body so much.

Sacrificed. Who didn't come to the church and say, I'll do the minimum according to the call of duty. No.

I'll do everything. Whatever I can. I can sacrifice to help another brother or sister in the church in some way.

That's sacrifice. Little things. It doesn't have to be big things.

Can I do a little thing to help my brother or sister who's in need at the moment? Sure. Let me do it. It's a spirit of willing to sacrifice not for any other reason because Jesus loved me so much that I feel I can never ever finish paying that debt of love.

If we recognize the debt we have of love to Christ because He loved us, it will be very easy to serve the Lord and to serve His people. It's never a burden to me to serve God's people. Never, never, never.

I'll tell you there's only one reason for it because of two things. One, I'm discovering how much Jesus loved me. Second, I'm discovering how much He has forgiven me.

The more I discover these two things, life becomes very easy. I never have a complaint against any believer. Never, never, never that they're not grateful for what I've done.

Rubbish. Nobody has to be grateful to me. Nobody has to thank me for anything.

I'm repaying my debt to Jesus Christ when I serve the church. Have you ever looked at it like that? Have you looked at your brothers and said, there's so much I have to do to them because of the debt of love I have for Christ? I'm telling you what is in scripture. Turn with me to Romans in chapter 13.

I tell you there are verses in scripture where you need to get revelation and it will open your blind eyes to see things that are written right there but you didn't see it. Romans chapter 13. It's a verse we use to tell people you must never be in debt to anybody.

We usually think in terms of money. Romans 13.8. Owe nothing to anyone. Some of us may pat ourselves on the back and say, well I'm not in debt to anybody.

I've cleared all my debts. Hang on. I'll show you right now what a great debtor you are.

Owe nothing to anyone. If you borrowed money from somebody, return it and don't go borrowing money from people. If you have a need, go to the Lord.

I'll tell you why in 77 years I've never borrowed one cent from anyone. Now I'm not talking about your home mortgage or your car loan or your business mortgage. Those are not loans because you have something on the other side to show for that money.

I'm talking about when you want to go and borrow money for some selfish reason for yourself. I'll tell you why I've never done it. I can't imagine Jesus in his earthly life going to somebody and saying, listen, I'm a bit hard up right now because my heavenly father let me down.

So can you please lend me some money? Can you imagine that? Jesus going to someone and saying my heavenly father has let me down. I trusted him but he let me down. And I'm now hard up of cash.

Can you give me some? I cannot in my wildest imagination imagine Jesus saying that. And so I decided and I remember in the early years my wife and I married we were rock bottom poor. Beyond what you can think.

Buy many things. Necessity? There's no necessity except what I can afford. We call things necessities.

I say necessity to me is what I can buy without getting into debt. A lot of people use their credit card foolishly. I think it's an absolute shame if you're using your credit card to buy things for yourself which you can easily do without just because you have a credit card.

And then that increases your debt. And oh no man anything. Do you take it seriously? I've taken it seriously and it's changed my life.

You take every word of God seriously I tell you when you pray God will listen to you. Do you know why God does that? Because you don't listen to what he says. You don't take what he says seriously.

God says I don't take what you say seriously either. You can keep on praying. You begin to take God's word seriously God will take your word seriously.

He treats us exactly how we respond to him. Very important. So oh no man anything but there is a debt that you will have to others.

The debt of love. How in the world did I get a debt of love? I mean if I borrowed money from somebody I can understand I have to pay it back. But how in the world did I get into a debt of love to this guy? I'll tell you.

Because when God loves us so much and pours his love into our heart it is not meant for us to keep. That's what I discovered. When the Holy Spirit fills a person he fills his heart with love and that puts him in debt to everybody else he meets.

It's something like this. The picture God gave me was in India we have mailmen who go from house to house delivering letters and more than what mailmen do here. Here they only deliver letters but in India the mailmen also deliver money orders.

A money order in India is you go to a bank and you fill in a form and give the address and name of the person you want to send some money to. It's a post office. You say I want to send 500 rupees to this person and you give the money to the post office and there is a charge for that service.

And that money order form is sent just like a letter to that other address you sent to and at the other end the post office gets that and gives the postman 500 rupees and says go and give this money to this address. So the postman leaves the post office early in the morning in India maybe with 200,000 rupees in his bag. It's a huge amount of money.

He could be one of the wealthiest people in that town or in that village in that day. He's got so much money he's never seen in his life. But not one cent of that belongs to him.

It's all meant to be given. He's got to give 500 here, he's got to give 2000 there and he's got to give 3000 here and 700 here. He's got a list of names with all these money order forms and if he comes back to the post office with even one rupee left in that bag he's a thief.

He has stolen somebody's money. He's in debt. He leaves the post office in debt to 50 people or 100 people whatever the area is to cover and he has to clear that bag of all that money.

That's the picture the Lord gave me. The Lord says I've filled your bag, your heart with love. That's made you, I've loved you so much, I've forgiven you so much, I've done so much for you in your life.

Now you have to give that to others. I put you in debt to everybody you meet. Not the whole world.

I won't meet the whole world but the ones I meet. So if I come to a church I say I'm in debt to people here. If I go to another church I'm in debt to them.

And that mailman can't say it's raining, rain or sunshine, he's got to go and clear his debt. He can wear a hat, he can take an umbrella. Many of the mailmen walk to their beat.

Some go on bicycles. Nobody goes in a car. Not in India, no one.

They have to sacrifice in order to clear this debt. They have to bicycle all the way or walk all the way to somebody's house and clear the debt. And I say Lord, that's a great example for me.

And you ask that postman why are you making all this sacrifice, walking all the way to different people's houses. I'm in debt. I'm a mailman.

I wonder if you see yourself like that. I wonder if you see that God's love for you has put you in debt to everybody else. And you have to be a maximum Christian.

I put you in debt in love for the Lord first of all and say Lord, I will not hold anything back from you. I want to serve you. I remember when the Lord called me for a service and I left my job in the Navy 51 years ago in 1966.

One of the things the Lord told me is, if you are going to be my servant, you have to be servant of all my people as well. You cannot be my servant and not the servant of my people. So I see myself as a servant of God's people even today.

And if whatever God calls me to do, I say fine, you can have it. So I want to encourage you my brothers and sisters here to come a little higher. The Lord's inviting you today.

He has not said anything to you to condemn you. But he's an invitation saying my son, my daughter, will you come a little higher today to a higher level of the Christian life than you've been living so far? Will you try to understand a little more of my love, a little more of how much you've been forgiven and be willing to sacrifice a little more for me and for the church. And don't be so centered around yourself and your own convenience and how this will inconvenience you or that will inconvenience you.

I'm willing to do all that, you know, not for any gain, but because Jesus loved me. That's all. It's a shame to live your whole life like that and say I'm not doing this for any gain or profit.

And I believe that's the reason why so much of Christianity has gone astray. Because most preachers today are doing their work for the Lord for money. Jesus said you cannot serve God in money.

Just know two ways about that. And that's, in other words, earthly gain becomes a factor. Now you may not do it for money.

I don't think anyone here is serving God for money. But you can do it for some honor or some acceptance before others. It's just as bad as money.

You want to get something from them. You don't want money. But it may be money also.

I know there are people who come to a church hoping somebody will give them a handout. There's plenty like that in India. It can be anywhere.

You may not be like that because you've got enough for your needs. But there are ways in which we can come to a church for some personal advantage or gain. I know that.

I know somebody asked me in India once because when a brother was working for another brother's business, he asked me a question about it. And I told him, you know the Bible covers every possible situation. And the Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 2 that if you work for, we had a brother who was working for another brother who had his business there in Bangalore.

And I told him, the Bible says in 1 Timothy 6.2 that you as a believer must work more than the unbeliever who's working in the same shop. It was some type of automobile type of shop. I said, you have got to work

more for this brother because your master is a believer.

You've got to work more, all the more it says in 1 Timothy 6.2 because you're working for a believer. But I found in some situations, they did the opposite. They didn't even work as much as the unbelievers.

They would say, oh this is a believer. I can take it easy and relax. They went exactly 100% against the word of God.

Why would they do all the more? Why would they go beyond the call of duty? Because they have understood that Jesus loved me so much and he didn't just do the minimum. He said, what's the maximum I can do? Anything less than this is not true Christianity. And if you find that people who have this spirit of giving everything and all the more, and if you find them becoming what you may call an exclusive club, it is not an exclusive club.

It's that inner circle of people who are very close to Jesus Christ. You can call them by whatever name you like, but they are the ones who live in the most holy place, who have sacrificed everything, and have come close to the Lord, and they have an amazing fellowship between themselves. I find such a group of people almost everywhere I go.

Those are the only ones I really want to be with. The others can take the blessings and go home. But the ones I fellowship with are this inner core, because I see that from Jesus.

Every situation, he looked for these three. I can think of the time when he went to pray for Jairus' daughter being raised from the dead. Boy, what an amazing experience.

Can you imagine the privilege of seeing a dead person right before your eyes being raised from the dead? And all the 12 came into the room. You read that Jesus told nine of them to go away. Go and close the door.

I want only Peter, James, and John here. Exclusive again? Lord, what is this exclusive club? Always the three of you, moment of transfiguration, you take those three. We want to see this girl raised from the dead.

No. Go out. Close the door.

And now Peter, James, and John are there, and then Jesus says, he raises that child from the dead. I tell you, I want to be in Jesus' inner circle. And I want to be with those who are in Jesus' inner circle.

And whatever other people may think that they are put outside the door, I am not bothered. I follow Jesus, and I don't care for the opinion of people. Be wholehearted like that.

And I believe that the Lord will build such a core that the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against that church. And this is how we have built our churches. Everybody can get the benefit of it, but there's an inner core that fights the battles.

One last thing. If you read the story of Gideon in Judges chapter 7, there were 32,000 people who came to fight the battle. And the Lord said, all those who are scared, go home.

20,000 went away. There were about 10,000 left. And then you see, even these guys are not wholehearted.

Many of them are just seeking their own. Let me test them at the river. Go to the river and let's see who forgets about the enemy and buries their head in the river.

And who are the ones who will be alert to the enemy and drink the water with their hands? It's a picture of those who are always alert for spiritual things and their involvement that rips you out of the world. How much you dip yourself in the world when you've got a thing to do for the Lord, when you've got a battle to fight for the Lord? Only 300. We have to live in the world.

We have to do a minimum. Everybody's thirsty, but they just left the water with their hands and drank only minimum necessary in order to quench their thirst. But there was one that day.

You will have no regret among the 300 who fight the Lord's battles. And I always pray in every church that that core group will slowly increase. And I've discovered one thing.

That's also true in every church. That very often it is the people who join the church in the 11th hour who come late, who join this core group. And people who came at the first hour forever remain on the fringe.

I've seen that again and again and again. People who glory in their seniority. I've been in church so many years.

It counts for nothing before God. You can think you're the most senior person in the church. God doesn't care for that.

It's those who are willing to fight the battle and be a maximum Christian. Those are the ones who accomplish. And I've discovered that.

That I'm amazed that some people have been in our church for 40 years in Bangalore. They're on the fringe. And some have come just for a couple of years ago.

They came into the church. They've come into that core group wholehearted, radical. That's God's way.

So I pray that there will be such a... I don't expect any church to have everybody in the most holy place. There'll always be some people in the outer court who just come for the blessings. There'll be a few in the holy place who want a little more.

But there'll be a core group in the most holy place who are radical, wholehearted, who want to fight the Lord's battles, who are maximum Christians. And I pray that that number will increase because that is the real church. That is the real body of Christ that Jesus is going to accomplish.

His purpose is through. And I'm not talking about going to heaven. I'm talking about accomplishing God's purpose here before we go.

And I pray that you will take this challenge seriously. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we pray that no one will feel condemned, but everyone will feel challenged to rise above the low level they may be living in right now.

Thank you, Lord. We believe you are here to help us, to lead us higher always.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/LVWMZUcUH2A.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/maximum-christians-and-minimum-christians/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net