

Rejoicing in God's Authority Over Us

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's authority over us, rather than our own accomplishments or abilities, and living a life of obedience and faith.

Duration: 1:00:59

Scripture: Genesis 1, Matthew 13:44-46, Luke 10:17, 1 Corinthians 2:12, Revelation 3:18

Topics: "Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of laying a strong foundation in one's faith before diving into deeper spiritual matters. He warns against focusing solely on external appearances and urges listeners to seek a genuine transformation from within. The sermon draws from Luke 10:17-24, where Jesus sends out seventy disciples to minister and perform miracles. The speaker highlights the danger of pride and hypocrisy, emphasizing the need for humility and a soft heart before God.

Transcript

As you all know, I'm 67 years old today, and half of that time I have lived in Bangalore. So that's a pretty long time, 50% of that time. And one of the things I have sought the Lord for, whenever my birthday comes around, which you can also do when you get a birthday, is to ask the Lord to give you a word.

And I can't say I have always received a word from the Lord for every single birthday of mine, but sometimes I have. And it's been very meaningful to prepare me for the days ahead. And the same thing for you.

Anything I say about myself, I want to say applies to you as well. Because we are God's children, and we are sinners saved by grace. We are not sinners, we are sinners saved by grace.

So, we are accepted in Christ. And you may also not hear a clear word from the Lord every birthday of yours, but if you seek him, sometimes you hear a word. If you read the Old Testament, you sometimes see, on the seventh day of the tenth month, in the reign of King So-and-so, the word of the Lord came to somebody, Jeremiah or someone.

They didn't have a clear word every day, but they did sometimes get a clear word from God. I believe that God speaks to us every day. That's what we read in the first chapter of the Bible.

Every one of those six days, God said something. That's written in the first chapter of the Bible to teach us that every day of our life, God wants to speak to us. But many a time, the word of God is to cleanse us, renovate us like the earth was renovated in Genesis 1. The earth was in a very corrupt state when God began to speak.

And every day as he spoke, that earth became better and better and better. Till one day, God looked at everything and said it was very good. And that is God's will for us, as God speaks to us every day and we listen to it.

If we respond like the earth responded, every day will get better. And you know, it won't be just a song, but it'll really be true every day with Jesus. It's sweeter than the day before and every year will be better and better until one day God will look at our lives and say, excellent.

But it was his work. You know, when God said very good, he was examining his work. It wasn't the work of the earth.

The earth did not renovate itself. That's another message we get from the first chapter of the Bible, that you cannot renovate yourself. There are different religions that teach self-improvement.

There are management classes that teach self-improvement. There are different organizations like the Moral Rearmament Reformation Group and things like that that teach some type of self-improvement program, but it doesn't work. It's only superficial.

It's not deep. It's not from within. It's only on the outside.

It's a veneer. It's like laminate on some cheap wood to make it look like something expensive. That is what moral reformation is.

You know, clean up the outside to make you look good. It's not scratch the surface and the laminate goes and you see it's pretty rotten wood inside. God doesn't do a work like that.

When God does a work, it goes deep and it's thorough and you can scratch any part of it and it's genuine. There's no counterfeit in it. So, I want to share with you what I received this morning.

It's in Luke's Gospel, chapter 10. This is the time when, verse 17 onwards, when 70 of his disciples had been sent out by the Lord to minister his word and to do miracles. They'd given him authority.

He'd given them authority for that. Came back and said, Lord, even the demons, Luke 10, 17, are subject to us in your name. And he said, I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

That's the one verse in the Bible which tells us how fast Satan moves. When God cast him down, his movement was like lightning, 300,000 kilometers per second. So, when we resist the devil in Jesus' name, your life is clean.

And you believe that he was defeated on the cross. You resist him in Jesus' name. That's the speed at which he'll go away from you.

So, it says here that the Lord says, I've given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions. They're all the part of the enemy. And nothing will injure you.

And then he says, nevertheless, don't rejoice in this. We have a tendency to rejoice that the devil runs away from us at 300,000 kilometers per second. Or that demons are subject to us in Jesus' name.

Or even victory over sin. That sin that ruled me so long, I can overcome it. And very often that leads to a comparison of ourselves with other people who don't seem to have that measure of victory that we have.

And that brings pride, which makes us worse than everybody else. That's the devil's tactic. You can get victory, he says, that's fine.

And he comes and puffs you up and makes you worse than when you didn't have victory. Because I'll tell you something, pride is the absolutely worst sin of all. They didn't have light on this in the Old Testament.

That's why the Old Testament Ten Commandments only spoke about things like adultery and idolatry and taking the Lord's name in vain. And dishonoring father and mother and not keeping the Sabbath and stealing and lying and things like that. But you never find in any of the commandments, thou shall not be proud.

Even though that's the worst sin of all. Why is it that the Lord didn't give that commandment? For the same reason that he permitted divorce in the Old Testament. Do you know that in the Old Testament people permitted divorce? And some Christians would like to live in the Old Testament, particularly in western countries.

But after Jesus has come, he said, no, I don't permit that except for fornication. And then the Pharisees asked Jesus, why did Moses permit it? You're saying something else. And Moses said, and Jesus said in Matthew 19, because of the hardness of your heart.

In the Old Testament, people's hearts were hard. And you can't give a commandment like, don't divorce your wife to a man who's got a hard heart. I mean, he can't stand his wife.

So God says, okay, you can't stand her, put her away. Now, in the New Testament, of course, the vast majority of the world haven't entered into the New Covenant. So they're still under Old Testament times.

So that's okay if they divorce their wives, unconverted, godless people. But anyone, anyone who says, I have received Christ into my life. If he has really received Christ, God has given him a new heart.

Ezekiel 36, verse 26 onward says, I will take away the hard heart and I'll give you a soft heart. Because I'll put my spirit inside you. So one of the things that happens when we are born again is our heart is no longer hard.

If your heart is hard towards other people, the chances are you're not really born again. If you're hard towards your wife and hard towards your husband, hard towards your children, I would suggest that you go to the Lord and ask him whether he has really put his spirit within you. Because that's one of the marks of this New Covenant Christian.

The hard heart becomes soft. And so, you know, that's why now the Lord, when Jesus came, he spoke so much against pride and hypocrisy. The New Testament speaks about God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourself unto the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time. So these commandments were not in the Old Testament. Because they didn't have light on these things.

And so, the danger when we have victory over sin or when demons are subject to us or God uses us to do something somewhere, is the danger of pride. So anyway, the word that the Lord spoke to me is from the message translation of this passage. And I want to read it to you.

The same passage. See what I've given you. See what I've given you.

Protection from every assault of the enemy. No one can put a hand on you. All the same, the great triumph or victory is not in your authority over evil, but in God's authority over you.

And his presence with you. Not in your authority over evil, but in the measure in which God has authority over you. That's the thing we need to rejoice in.

But we don't normally think of that so much as, Oh, I've got authority over this and that. He goes on to say, Not what you do for God, but what God does for you or has done for you. That is the agenda for rejoicing.

You rejoice in what God, what you have done for God. It'll make you compare yourself with others. You rejoice in some ability that you have, which made you accomplish something.

Maybe you got a good job and you got a good salary because of your abilities. And you studied hard and got degrees and got a good job with a high salary. Maybe you earn ten times what other people earn.

Fine. Says don't rejoice in it. I hope you take that commandment seriously.

Don't rejoice in what you have accomplished, but in what God has done for you. Don't rejoice in the fact that you can preach well, sing well, do so many things well. But what God has done for you.

And you know, this is something that we need to remind ourselves of constantly. Because though we may not talk about it publicly, we can secretly gloat over what we have done. Our authority over evil.

And I thank God for his word to my heart. No one can put a hand on you. The devil can't touch you.

That's great. And his agents can't touch you. What they do will only work for your good.

What a blessed position we are in. And the Lord says no one can touch you. No enemy can put a hand on you.

You don't need any black cat commandos or security guards around you to protect you. Like nowadays not only prime ministers, but even famous preachers need a bodyguard around them and they move around. Can you imagine Jesus going around with a bodyguard around him to protect him from people? It's just an indication of how far Christendom has drifted from the truth of Jesus Christ.

That a lot of famous preachers today need a bodyguard around them. And the son of God, when he walked on the earth, he didn't need that. No one can lay hand on you.

No one can touch you. See what I've given you. Protection from every assault of Satan and his agents.

So let's just think about this a little bit. The great victory that we can rejoice in is not in our authority over evil, but in God's authority over us. And his presence with us.

And when we examine ourselves in that light, to see how much authority does God have over me, I tell you that leads to a lot of humility. How much authority, for example, does God have over your eyes? Does

God have authority over your eyes? We can accomplish so many things and have authority over this, that and the other. The Lord says forget it.

Ask yourself how much authority God has over your eyes. I mean, when you're tempted with something and you hear a voice, I think all of us hear a voice within saying, turn your eyes away, don't look at that. Is your obedience instant? That's authority.

You remember the Roman centurion spoke about authority when he talked about Jesus. He looked at Jesus and he said, hey, I'm a military man. I know something about authority, he told Jesus.

I know that when I tell somebody go, he goes. Because when somebody above me tells me to go, I go. When he tells me to come, I come.

So when I tell someone, it's like that, you know. Anyone who's been in the military has learned that on the parade ground, when somebody says, left turn, we turn left immediately. You can't say, well, I'm praying about it or thinking about it.

Well, if you say anything like that, not only if you don't say it, but you pause by two seconds before you obey, they'll teach you such a lesson, you'll never do it again for the rest of your life. I'm telling you, I know. It's only with God that people take liberties.

Nobody in the military or the police would dare to take such liberty with the one they call their commander. Christians take tremendous liberties. I mean, I can understand non-Christians who don't have a knowledge of God.

People who don't have a knowledge of God, I can understand they're taking liberties because their God may be some dead idol or someone who doesn't exist. But we're talking to someone who's existing, the living Christ who is alive. And when he tells you to turn your eyes away, it's like the military saying, about turn, turn around and look in the other direction.

And I'm looking in this direction and within two seconds I'm looking in the other direction. That's the military. And that's one way in which we can find out whether God has got authority over our lives.

Or it could be your tongue. You're sitting somewhere and you're tempted to pass on some juicy bit of information about someone, which you say is for prayer. Just for prayer.

And I'm only telling you, sister, I'm not telling anybody else. You go to fifty other sisters and say, I'm only telling you, sister. Gossip, gossip.

And the Holy Spirit says, don't do it. Is there an about turn immediately? Don't rejoice in how much of the Bible you know, how many meetings you've come for, or even maybe you prayed for somebody somewhere and he got healed. His fever left him or cold left him.

Or you prayed for your child who was seriously sick and God healed that child. God gave wisdom to the doctors to treat your child and the child is okay today. Yeah, sure, rejoice in that.

But that's not the great thing. The great triumph is that God has authority over you. Is there an about turn when the Lord says, don't say that word? You're tempted to say a rude word or an angry word to your husband or your wife in some provocative situation.

And you quickly hear a word saying about turn. You do it. That's what I mean by God's authority over you.

You know, we can read expressions like this. The great triumph is in God's authority over you. And it doesn't mean anything till we bring it down to practical day-to-day situations.

Otherwise, it's a nice thought, no? God's got all authority over me. We can sing it, say, Lord, you're Lord of my life and all that, etc. But you may bring it down to these practical situations, whether he has authority over me.

That when he tells me to about turn, I about turn. And equally, when he tells me to quick march, I quick march. That means he tells me to do something.

I don't have to pray about it once he's already told me. If I'm not sure, I didn't hear the command correctly, sure, there's nothing wrong in that. Say, Lord, I'm not very sure yet what your will is.

But once you know, and things written in the Bible, you know definitely. Obey immediately. Quick march.

Don't think about it. You march without questioning. I remember we were told in the military about how they selected commandos in the British Royal Army in England for fighting against the Germans in the Second World War.

And one of the things they tested them was for total obedience. They tested them for bravery. I won't tell you how they tested them for that, but they tested them for obedience.

That means when your top boss gives you a command, you don't reason it out and say, well, is that right or wrong? You just do it. Right or wrong, you do it, because your boss told you. They were told to do that, because that's the only way when you're in enemy territory, and you're a commando there, you're in extreme danger, and the commander who knows the whole situation tells you to move here or move there.

May not sound right to you, but that's for your safety. So the way they tested them was, they would make them walk on a jetty that stuck out into the sea. You know, the jetty where little boats come and tie up.

And the jetty goes straight up like that and ends at a certain point, and then it's a drop into the sea. And they'd make them stand on that jetty and say, quick march. And all 25 of them would march, march, march, march.

And when they came to the end of the jetty, those who used their senses would say, hey, I'm supposed to stop now. 5 or 10 of them would keep marching into the sea. Those 5 or 10 got selected.

The remaining who used their sense and stopped at the end of the jetty said, sorry, you can go home. Yeah? And that's the way you be a commando. Otherwise, you just look after the stores or something at home.

You get some third-rate job. And I thought of that. I've often remembered that, you know, when the Lord says, trust in the Lord with all your heart, Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6. And don't lean on your own understanding.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, there are certain things he says, which doesn't seem to appeal to your reason. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him.

And he will direct your paths. Now, let me say this. Don't just act on any impulse that comes to your mind.

It may not be from God. The more you walk with the Lord, the more you're able to detect whether that impulse, that thought is from God or from yourself or from the devil. But if you're not sure, wait.

There are many ways to know God's will. You consult with others and wait on the Lord and say, Lord, I'm not sure, but confirm it to me by circumstances, by open doors, closed doors, the advice of godly people and your word and the witness of your spirit within my heart. These are the ways by which we know God's will.

But once I'm sure, I don't lean on my own understanding. The highest Christian life is not the life where we live according to our understanding. You can live according to understanding and reach a reasonable level of the Christian life.

But if you want to live the highest Christian life by faith, we walk by faith and not by sight. We walk by faith and not by our reason. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Not head, heart. And don't lean on your head. See, a lot of people, their Christianity is in their head.

You know, they know so much. They come to a meeting and their head gets stuffed with information like it is right now. But among those many who are sitting and listening to God's word in their head, some listen to a word in their heart.

They trust that. Trust in the Lord, Proverbs 3, 5, with all your heart. And don't lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways, acknowledge Him. And He will direct your path. So God's authority over me means, when He says something, I don't question it.

I read something in God's word and I don't question it. Of course, the first thing people are lost in is, how do you know this is God's word? How do you know this Bible is God's word? I mean, maybe Paul wrote that. That's his idea or Luke's idea or what they heard from someone else.

They wrote it down. In fact, Luke says that he never saw any of these things himself, Luke's gospel. I heard it.

I investigated and I wrote it down. Well, I'll tell you this. In my younger days, I used to think that the way to convince people about the Bible was the traditional way.

Tell them about all the archaeological inventions, discoveries in the Dead Sea and how that proved that this is the Bible and then some two or three scientific facts mentioned here and there, how that proves God's word. But I don't say that anymore. I say there's only one way to know this is God's word.

Test it. Read it. Test the promises there and see if it works.

That's the only way. I mean, if I'm eating an orange here, how do you know whether it's bitter or sweet? I enjoy it, but I may be bluffing you. How do you know? Are you going to put it in a microscope and analyze it? You won't know whether it's sweet or not.

It's tasting. The Bible says, taste and see that the Lord is good. So that's the only way to know that this is God's word.

I mean, I can't prove it to you. I'll tell you honestly, I can't prove it to you. There are so many intellectual ways I can prove it to you, but that will only convince your head.

But the way to know it's God's word is by actually reading it, obeying it, meditating on it, and you know it's God's word. That's what I've discovered in the last 47 years. And I found it to be God's word.

And that's why now I take seriously things that are written here. And I know that's God speaking. I mean, you may not believe that fully.

My conviction is that the vast majority, please listen carefully because it may apply to you. The vast majority of believers, I'm not talking about those who are born in Christian families. I'm talking about those who made a choice to be born again, which includes perhaps most of you here.

The vast majority of born-again believers are not 100% convinced that the Bible is the word of God. I'll tell you why I say that. If they were 100% convinced about the word of God, at least two things would happen.

One, they would study this book thoroughly. I mean, if you knew that all the questions for your chemistry paper in 10th standard was coming from one book, which book would you read? All the other books on chemistry? Or this particular one? What about all these crooks who get the question paper from people who are selling it in the market? I've heard of times where the Hindi paper is available in the market for a certain price. ICSC Hindi paper.

I mean, I heard it. I never wanted to find out where it was. Even if somebody gave it to me free, I wouldn't show it to anyone.

But people who are crooks like that, they get that paper, they know this is the real one. They study only that. This is what's going to come.

I don't need to study anything else. Do you know what you're going to be tested for at the judgment seat of Christ? Everything is in this book. If you want to be ready for that, you better study this book.

It's the only thing that's going to come. And when I see 99% of believers I've met don't study this book. They read it to ease their conscience.

I must have a quiet time. But they don't study it. And therefore, I don't believe that they accept this as God's word.

They don't believe that there's only one book in the whole world written by God. They read the newspaper and novels, sometimes with greater interest than the book. Well, you can't know what God's commanded you to do.

And the second thing is, if you believe that this book was written by God, you would not hesitate to obey anything written in it. I have challenged people in many places. Can you tell me something in this book that you read which I'm not obeying? Please tell me.

In my life, in my family life, in our churches. I mean, we don't even call people pastors in our churches. Because we want to obey what God's word says.

Nobody in this book was called a pastor. Not even one. That's the extent to which we... It's not a big thing.

I mean, if somebody calls himself a pastor, that's okay. I'm not... If he wants to be called pastor, I'll call him pastor too. I've got no objection.

But, I'm just saying, there's nobody in this book that was called a pastor. And so, we follow even that. So, I tell people, listen, if you find... I find, for example, that Jesus never took an offering from people.

So, I say, we don't do it in our churches. I mean, even to that extent, we seek to follow exactly what... But somebody gave, people gave voluntarily, and that's how we receive money in the church. We keep a box, and people give voluntarily.

Every little thing, we're trying to obey exactly what scripture says, because of one reason. We believe there's only one book in the whole world, written by God. 99% of Christians don't believe it.

Because they don't take these things literally. They say, ah, things have changed. The 20th century now, we've got to modify it.

You know, we teach that scissors should cover their heads. It doesn't matter to me if somebody doesn't, they may not have light on it. But we teach it is a very small thing, because it's written in the book.

To me, this answers all matters in relation to the Christian life. I don't need a second opinion. Like, you know, you go to a doctor and he says something, you go for a second opinion.

I don't need a second opinion once I've read this book. I don't want to know what some theologian said, or what anybody else said. I know what the book says, I know what God says.

But as I said, I can't convince you this is God's word until you read it and test it for yourself. But that's one way in which we can find out whether God has got authority over us. Rejoice.

The great triumph in your life is that not your authority over things, and your authority over so many people in your office, and so many people jump at your word, and you've got power over people to recruit people to sack them. It means nothing. Ask yourself how much authority God has over your life.

That's the measure of your worth. Your worth in the corporate world may be how many, what your salary is, and how many people you rule over, and all that. But your worth before God, whom you ultimately have to answer to, is how much authority God has over your life.

And I want God to have total authority over my life. And that's what that Roman centurion discovered in Jesus' life, that Jesus was so submitted to the Father, that if he spoke to a sickness 40 miles away, that sickness would go. That's what that centurion was saying.

You don't have to come to my house to speak from here, it'll go. Because I can sense, a military man can sense another military man. I've noticed this myself.

I look at certain people and I say, that guy was in the military. Because a certain thing about his bearing. He won't walk with slouched shoulders like that.

Because they're all straightened out. And this Roman centurion saw something in Jesus' attitude. It was not the way he walked, but there was something, there was a dignity, there was an authority about him.

And he sensed, this is a military man. I don't know exactly what authority he has, but he's under some authority. And I know a man who seems to have more authority than I have.

I have only authority over soldiers. A hundred soldiers. And he said, I know you're a man under authority.

Speak to that sickness, it'll go. And Jesus, you know what Jesus told that man in Matthew chapter 8? He said to the whole crowd, he said, I've never seen faith like this. Here I seek faith.

Faith means that man's trust in Jesus. That Jesus could speak to something, 40 miles away or a million miles away, something would happen. Jesus may be in heaven today, but I say, Lord, heaven may be millions of miles away from earth, but if you speak the word, it'll happen right here.

It'll happen in my life. It'll happen in my home. It'll happen wherever I am.

That's faith. Because you're a man under authority. You listen to everything your father said.

You never disobeyed anything, therefore your authority is absolute. That's why he said at the end of his life, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me. It wasn't given to him because he was the son of God.

It was given to him because he submitted to his father's authority completely. And he says to us, as the father sent me, so send I you. I want to say to all of you, my brothers and sisters, there's a lot more authority that you could have in your life.

Spiritual authority, I mean. For God's glory, not your own. If you can experience this victory of allowing God to have total authority over every area of your life, allow him to control the way you spend your money, allow him to control the way you spend your time.

Time and money are two exceptionally important areas in our life in which God tests us to see whether we have authority over that or he has authority over us. Our eyes and our tongue are two very important members of our body. Jesus spoke about the eye, the tongue and the hand.

Three parts of our body which we use very often, the eye, the tongue and the hand, every day we use them. And the question is, does God have authority over my eyes and my tongue and my hand that when he can say to any of these, about turn, I turn about. When he says quick march, I quick march.

Jesus had given, and the same way in relation to things outside our body, money and time are the two areas where most Christians who claim to be believers have not given God complete authority. He does not have authority over their, in these areas of their life. You know, a lot of people think, believe the devil's lie that if you allow God to have authority over these things, your life will be unhappy because God is a spoiled sport.

He'll never allow you to enjoy yourself. He's a miser. He will not allow you to buy one ice cream.

It's not true. No. I can give thanks and eat two ice creams, or at least I could when I was a little healthier.

I don't want my cholesterol levels to go up. That's the only reason I eat it now. You fellas can eat it.

God has given us many things to enjoy. He's not a spoiled sport, I'll tell you that. You can eat.

And he doesn't want you to live in a little hut. He's given you enough money to live in a comfortable house. He wants you to live in a comfortable house.

I believe that. So don't believe these wrong concepts of God that the devil tries to put that God is an ascetic. We're not followers of John the Baptist eating locusts and wild honey.

I've never eaten those things in my life. I'm a follower of Jesus, who was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, but one who also knew how to fast for 40 days. Don't forget that part.

He was balanced. He could enjoy a good meal and he could fast for 40 days. So God is a good God.

He's a loving Father. And just like you want your children to enjoy, God wants us to enjoy. But he wants to have authority over our lives.

He wants us to have authority over our lives for our good. It's for our good. Then the second part here is, not what you do for God, but what God does for you.

Now I would say, generally speaking, in this church and in our churches, we have mostly thought about what we should do for God. How we should please him, and how we should do this, and how we should deny ourselves, and how we should take up the cross. It's all important.

But very often, we get a bit weary and heavy-laden, always thinking about what we've got to do for God. And I remember in the early days, when we had other influences on us which were more legalistic, we had a lot of that type of thing. Every message was on what we have to do.

Now we've got to love somebody. We've got to forgive somebody. We've got to deny ourselves.

We've got to take up the cross. It's all wonderful. It's all absolutely scriptural.

But it's only one side of the coin. It's like a coin where one side is always empty, the other side is completely empty. That's not a real coin.

That's the point. And here's what Jesus is saying, it's not what you do for God, but what God does for you. And I've looked at it like this.

Let me ask you a very simple question, which I'm sure even the children can answer. What is the most important part of this building, the foundation or the superstructure? Which one? You know the answer. If you have a good enough foundation, you can build a skyscraper, a hundred stories high.

But if the foundation is not good, you can't even build a building, one floor of a building, it will collapse. A foolish man built a one-story house, it collapsed. Because he didn't have a foundation.

Now listen. In your life also, there are two sides to your life. One is the foundation, the other is the superstructure.

And the foundation is what God has done for you. The superstructure is what you do for God. Never forget that.

And it's a very simple way of knowing how the Christian life is to be. And if you don't have a deep enough foundation and awareness of what God has done for you in Christ, on the cross, and through the resurrection, and through the Holy Spirit coming into you, what God does for you, then, you're not going to be able to build very high. And that's why suddenly your life collapses.

Some little thing happens and you get all discouraged and give up. You never seem to be able to come into a life of victory. Because you're trying to build that first floor and the first floor itself collapses.

And God wants you to build a skyscraper. And you've been trying for years. You can't get past the first floor.

You know the answer today. You need a deep foundation. You need to understand what God has done for you.

I was recently in one of our churches and I said, I want all of you to read Ephesians 1 to 3 for the next few weeks. Only Ephesians 1 to 3. It's one of those wonderful passages of the New Testament where there's not a single commandment. Isn't that great? To read a portion of scripture with no commandments, no exhortation, no do this, do that, nothing.

It's a safe passage of scripture. Ephesians chapter 1 to 3. Read it. It's all saying about what God has done for us in Christ.

The whole three chapters. And if you find an exhortation, show it to me. I haven't found it yet.

It's all from beginning till end. What God has done for us. And what is going to be the result of what God has done for us.

It's not the only thing. Because chapter 4, 5 and 6 is full of exhortations. That's the balance of scripture.

The foundation first, and then the superstructure. But a lot of people spend most of their time in chapter 4, 5 and 6. Very important. But be wise and dig deep and lay a foundation first.

The foundation is what God has done for you. I've seen churches where they emphasize what God's done for them. And that's all.

Ephesians 1 to 3. For 20 years it's Ephesians 1 to 3. They're pretty shallow. And then I find other churches where it's Ephesians 4, 5 and 6 for 20 years. And they are pretty shallow too.

Only these shallow fellows are always happy and smiling. And these shallow fellows are serious and long-faced. That's the only difference.

But both are equally shallow. I mean, this smiling is all superficial. To me it's like the man walking down the road smiling all the time.

He's an idiot. I mean, it doesn't mean anything. They'll have a sticker on their car saying, Smile, God loves you.

These fellows have a sticker saying, Repent, God loves you. So, I say, you ask me, which of these two do I have? It's like asking me, Do I have a left leg or a right leg? Which do I have? Which do you think? You can't see it, but what do you think I'm standing on right now? You know, if I, for example, I decide to stand on one leg for some time, you'll see me a bit unstable. Then I'll say, No, no, that's not right.

I've got to go to the other extreme, stand on the other leg, and again I'm unstable. This is exactly how it is with a lot of Christians. God's given us two legs.

What he's done for us, what we do for him. That's another way to look at it. And the stability when you have two legs.

But if you have either leg, only what God does for us, or only what I do for God, you're like a person who stands on his left leg or right leg. You must have both. But, you know, when a person has gone to such an extreme, if I were going to a church where for years and years and years they only heard about Ephesians 1 to 3, I'd preach Ephesians 4, 5 and 6 to them.

That's prophetic ministry. Prophetic ministry means give them what they need. I mean, you know there's a different medicine for constipation and a different medicine for diarrhea.

It's very important to know the distinction between these two medicines. For doctors especially. Because you give a laxative to a fellow who's got diarrhea, it's going to just make his problem worse.

That's exactly what's happening in a lot of churches. They all twerk for 20 years what God has done for them. And some preacher comes up there, again he's giving a laxative to people who've got diarrhea.

That's not what they need, brother. They need something to stop that. It's the same, it could be the other way.

Here's a fellow with constipation and you give him something to make it more constipated. Well, that doesn't help him. It's exactly like that.

It's actually like that. I'm not exaggerating. Because you go to a church where they're always speaking about Ephesians 1 to 3 and some prophet comes in and speaks on Ephesians 4 to 6, they won't accept him.

They'll throw him out. We don't want that fellow again. They want to keep on getting laxatives even though they're having a problem with diarrhea.

It's crazy. You'd never go to a doctor like that who makes your problem worse. And it's the same thing with people on the other side of the fence.

They are legalists to the core and the only fellow they'll hear is another legalist who gets in, ties one more chain around them. Someone who comes and tells them about being free in Christ and what God's done for us, it doesn't sort of impress them. This is the tragedy in Christendom.

God's given us two legs. They prefer to stand on one. We see people, one extreme standing on the right leg and they say, that's wrong, so they stand on the left leg.

So that's what I'm trying to say. We need to understand. I believe in this church.

We need to understand more even though we have heard. We need to be deeply rooted in what God has done for us. And the reason why, you know, some people say, Brother Zach, you know what's happened? In CFC, we've become more liberal and allowed people to do what they like and look at the standards going down everywhere.

Standards will never go down if you really understood what God has done for you. Impossible. When I understood what Jesus did for me on the cross, the depth of his suffering, it was not just physical, that for three hours he experienced the agony of an eternal hell because of my sin.

He did not make my standard go down. Far from it. It made my standard go up.

I hated sin more. And if you hear what God has done for you and it makes you more take advantage of God's grace, let me tell you honestly, I don't think you're converted. That's the honest truth.

Think of the prodigal son when he comes back after having wasted all his father's property and money and everything and he comes back and the father says come right in and puts a ring on his hand and sits at the table and enjoys himself and he again wants to get some money from the father and go to the far country. Well, what do you think? Something's wrong with this guy. This guy hasn't understood properly his father's love.

He's just taking advantage of it. Then I would wonder whether he has any attachment to his father at all. He's probably an illegitimate son.

He's not really a real son. That's what I have to say about a lot of Christians who take advantage of God's grace. They are probably illegitimate children.

Not genuine children. You know, there's a verse like that in the New Testament in case you didn't know. It says in Hebrews in chapter 12 about illegitimate children and real children that God has.

Hebrews chapter 12 it says in verse 8 He's saying that God doesn't discipline you when you do something wrong. If you are without discipline of which all children are partakers then you are illegitimate children. Nonsense.

Our earthly fathers disciplined us. I had four boys and I disciplined all of them but I never once disciplined any of those boys on the road side to do worse things than my boys ever did. Never.

Why? And that little boy on the road is doing something worse than my son did and I don't discipline him. One simple reason. He's not my son.

Why do I take it very seriously when any of my sons do a small wrong thing because he's my son. I want him to be a godly person when he grows up. God is like that.

He disciplines His children and if you don't if you are not disciplined you are probably not His children. So if you take advantage of God's grace God you learn about what God has done for you He's done for you He's done for you and say I can relax I can sin and I'll tell you you need to be born again. You need to become a child of God.

You know no matter how much you tell a cat you know you can jump in the dirty water you can get filthy and muddy you don't need to keep on licking yourself all the time and be clean the cat will say no thank you I know how to take care of myself I don't need your advice. The cat's got more sense. That means it's a real cat but think of a pig who is put on a cat's skin and acting like a cat that will just relish the thought of jumping into the muck and that's not a real cat that's a counterfeit.

So a real child of God cannot go into the muck. The prodigal son when he came back and ate all that grand food there he's not going to go back and eat what the pigs ate again. Let me turn you to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 1 Corinthians chapter 2 is another lovely passage on what God has done for us.

And I want to read from verse 6 onwards verse 6 onwards till verse 13 I'm reading in the message translation We of course have plenty of wisdom to pass on to you once you get your feet on firm spiritual

ground. That's what I've been telling you firm spiritual ground once you get your feet on firm spiritual ground we've got a lot of wisdom to give you but we can't give it to you right now because your feet are not firmly established.

And it's not popular wisdom the fashionable wisdom of high priced experts high priced experts meaning preachers who charge a large salary that will be out of date in a year or so not that type of wisdom God's wisdom is something mysterious and it goes deep into the interior of his purposes for us you don't find it lying around on the surface you read the Bible superficially you won't find God's wisdom on the surface no it's like you don't find gold on the surface gold is 10,000 feet underground if you want to find it what you find on the surface is grass and mud and stones you won't find gold on the surface and you don't find this lying around the surface it's not the latest message but more like the oldest what God determined as the way listen to this what God determined as the way to

bring out his best in us you know God's way is to bring out the best in us to get the make use of your potential to the maximum it's like these business people who don't know how to invest their money properly they'll give it to a trustworthy investment banker who says listen I can give you 30% on your capital every year great I mean if he's a trustworthy person I mean I put it in a bank I get 4% and this guy says he's guarantee me 30% and he's a trustworthy man I give it to him because I don't know how to invest that's what the meaning of this verse is God says if you listen to me I can get the maximum potential out of your life and you live one life of 50, 60 years so much will come out of that if you give it to me if you let me have authority over you God is the way God is determined

to bring out his best in us long before we arrived on this scene he had made a plan for us you know that he made a plan for you before you arrived on this earth most of us haven't fulfilled it we say but I messed up my life for so long can I fulfill it now yes you can Paul messed up his life for 30 years going completely the wrong direction murdering people how many of you have murdered anybody Paul was worse than you he murdered people murdered Christians because they were following Jesus God turned him around when he was around 30 years old he lived for another 37 years or so he died when he was 67 and around that age and he could say at the end of his life I have finished my course how did he finish his course after messing up his life for 30 years that's one of the wonders of God when

you're holy and allow him to have authority over you even if you messed up quite a bit of your life he can do some miracles and still fulfill his purpose through you so that when you come to the end of your life you can say I finished my course what God planned for me before I arrived here I finished it I want to encourage you don't ever give up and saying oh it's too late now no it's not never too late it's too late when they put the last nail into your coffin then it's too late I agree but not before that okay the experts of our day don't have a clue and I would say this about a lot of preachers too they don't have a clue about what God's eternal plan is and here the scripture text says in verse 9 no one has ever seen or heard anything like this not even imagined anything quite like it

your imagination can't tell you how wonderful this is but you have seen it and heard it because God by his power the spirit has brought it all out into the open before you the spirit is not content to flit around on the surface even of your life he's not happy with just a moral reformation of your life where you look nice like laminate as I said on some rotten wood inside no he dives into the depths of God and brings out what God has planned for us right in the depths of God's mind just as he goes into the depths of God's mind and tells us what God has planned for you and that's what you heard this morning and he uses the example he says you're the only one who knows what's going on inside your mind and the Holy Spirit is the only one

who knows what's going on inside God's mind and if you

allow him to explain the scriptures to you he will tell you things which no preacher no book no cassette no CD can ever teach you I've discovered that for a number of years and he says here that he lets God the Holy Spirit lets us in on what God is thinking he gives us a full report on the gifts of life and salvation that God is giving us and we don't have to rely on the worst gifts now I want to read this verse to you in the NASB verse 12 we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit which is from God so that listen to this phrase so that we may know the things freely given to us by God do you know the New Testament teaches certain things are given to us freely and certain things are given to us we have to pay for we have to buy it for example the pearl of great price

you've got to pay a price for it that treasure hidden in the fields very expensive but salvation baptism Holy Spirit is free there are many of God's gifts that are free to the church in Laodicea the Lord said you've got to buy from me certain things but we need to know the things that God has given us freely so many wonderful things and when we rejoice in what God has done for us and given us freely it makes us equal to other people we don't glory I got it freely you got it freely I got salvation freely you got salvation freely I don't gloat over you you don't gloat over me our problem of pride is solved permanently when we rejoice not in what we do for God but in what God does for us has done for us not in the authority we have over evil but the authority that God has over us let's bow

before God as we examine our heart before Him there is a need in many of our lives to examine ourselves the measure in which God has authority over us the areas I mentioned and whether we are rejoicing more in what God has done for us or in what we are doing for Him the reason for a lot of pride lies in the fact that we think more about what we are doing for God and we don't think sufficiently about what God has done for us if we thought a little bit more about that we'd probably even have victory over sin in our life because victory over sin is based on what God has done for us and if our foundation is shallow our lowest floor the first story of our building collapses if your foundation is deep you can build a skyscraper on it so brothers and sisters let's examine our life and see what

we rejoice in Heavenly Father help us to apply what we have heard to our daily life and walk in the light of it save us from the pride that destroys our walk with you help us to rejoice in the things you have told us to rejoice in not be foolish thank you Father in Jesus name Amen.

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