

Seeing the Way of the Cross

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of building the church on divine principles and the necessity of embracing the way of the cross for true spiritual victory.

Duration: 1:00:50

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, Matthew 16:24, Luke 4:1-2, Luke 4:14, John 6:67-69, Romans 6:8-9

Topics: "The Cross", "Spiritual Death"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of choosing the way of the cross, following Jesus in dying to self daily, and experiencing the power of resurrection in different areas of life. It highlights the need to be led by the Holy Spirit to face temptations to do our own will and to consistently choose God's will. The sermon encourages building the church through radical, wholehearted commitment to the way of death to self, leading to a life where the forces of spiritual death have no power.

Transcript

We have been looking primarily at Matthew 16 and verse 18, because that's the first time Jesus spoke about the church. In fact, he used that word only twice, Matthew 16 and Matthew 18. And as I've seen so many churches around the world, I've seen a lot of difference between the church that Jesus builds and the one that man builds.

And many, many, most churches are built by men. Built by men in the sense that it comes out of their mind and their idea and their plan. They initiate a project and say, we're going to plant a church over there, and they go and do something, modify certain scriptures to suit the circumstances and situations.

But that's very different from the way Jesus builds his church. There are certain divine principles that can never be changed at any time. Times change, and the way people dress change, and language changes, but certain divine principles never change.

And that's the same in the first century, it's the same in the 21st century. If you want to build a church that Jesus is building, it means when Jesus builds his church, he doesn't come down from heaven and do it, because, you know, those who are members of his body, he uses them, different ones of us, not any one more than another. And ultimately, it's the Lord himself who builds the church, because he's the head.

So Matthew 16, 18, he says, I will build my church in the gates of hell. Hades, the parts of spiritual darkness, will not be able to overpower it. So I've always kept this in my mind anyway, that the mark of a church that Jesus builds is that the powers of darkness will not be able to overpower it, the powers of spiritual death.

The world is filled with the powers of spiritual death. The devil is the ruler of darkness, he's the prince of the world. And whether you realize it or not, there are powers which are always seeking to drag us down to spiritual death.

A lot of things that you see on television, the whole aim of it is to drag you down to spiritual death, to pollute your mind with spiritual death, to pollute your thinking, and gradually, if you see it long enough, even to pollute your language with the language of spiritual death. And you see that happen with many, many believers who were purer in the days when they never watched so much television and movies, and have lost out on spiritual life. The same thing with a lot of education today, we have to be very careful.

The books you read, the pictures you look at, even the hoardings on the roadside, you have to be very, very careful that the powers of spiritual death do not drag you down. It's like, you know, a lot of these are so invisible. It's like the germs and bacteria that are floating around in the air that can get into our system without even our knowing it.

I mean, when you get a flu, did you know when exactly that bug got inside you which gave you that flu? No. It's, you inhale something without knowing it. And later on, you see the effect of it in sickness.

Now, we are very careful. We don't let our children go somewhere where there are a lot of sickness because we know they'll pick it up so quickly. How is it some others who breathe the same thing don't get sick? It's because they've got a strong immune system, that they're built up through good habits of eating and exercise, et cetera.

And thus, they are strong that even when these germs come in, they can kill them. But others whose immune system is weak, they're not able to kill that and that's how they get sick. And that's why two people can breathe the same germs.

One gets sick and one even dies. The other doesn't get sick at all. It's the same spiritually.

God wants us to build a spiritual immune system within us and that's why he's given us his word. He's given us the power of the Holy Spirit. He's given us fellowship with other believers.

If you don't value things like this, if you don't value the genuine power of the Holy Spirit and read God's word, and especially fellowship with other godly people, if you don't value these things, your immune system is going to be weak. I mean, if your best friends are all worldly people and that's what you spend your time listening to their conversation, you're going to have a very weak immune system. And you keep asking, Oh, why is it I can't get victory over sin? You won't get it in a hundred years, brother, sister.

Your immune system is so weak because you're exposing yourself to the wrong type of people and you'll never get victory. You can try for a thousand years, you won't get it. You see the reason? The powers of darkness can never, never overpower the church that Jesus builds.

And when we say church, we're not talking about some invisible structure. Jesus was speaking about people. That's you and me.

People who are built on that foundation, who seek to live according to those divine principles given in the word, the powers of darkness that try to attack them, but their immune system is so strong because they follow these divine principles. They've studied God's word. They've sought to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

They have valued fellowship with God's people and they have chucked up friendships, which are polluting them. Even if those friends get offended, they're not bothered. They're more interested in pleasing God and being a pure witness for Christ on this earth than being disturbed by what some worldly friend thinks about them.

Now, I don't know whether all of you are like that, but if some of you are defeated by sin, consider whether you're the reason why you're defeated constantly and despite hearing so many messages on victory, you don't seem to get there. You'll never get there if you don't take some of these things I mentioned seriously. You read books which fill your head with unbelief, such as it doesn't matter how you live, you'll finally go to heaven, you're eternally saved because you said, Jesus, come into my heart, and all that type of stuff.

Well, no wonder you're defeated by sin. You need to read books that challenge you towards holiness. You need to be in fellowship in a church where every single Sunday, not once in a while, not even three Sundays in a month, but every single Sunday, you're challenged towards holiness.

If you're not, well, no wonder you're defeated in your home. No wonder you have problems. No wonder your children grow up to be rebellious.

It'll always be like that. We reap what we sow. So we're interested in building the church that Jesus spoke about, and one mark of it, as I said, is that the powers of spiritual darkness cannot overpower it.

Beyond all divine principles, the main reason why the powers of spiritual darkness cannot overpower the church Jesus built is because he himself is in the midst of that church, where two or three are gathered together in my name. You remember we spoke about that in one study, that most people who quote that verse in Matthew 18, 20, that's the second place where he spoke about the church, by the way, Matthew 18, and he used that expression where the church there, and then he said two or three gathered together in my name, and that means in the name of Jesus, the most misunderstood name among believers. Do you know that the Bible speaks about another Jesus in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 4? There are many Jesuses.

There's the Jesus of the Jehovah's Witnesses who don't believe that Jesus is the eternal creator. There's the Jesus of the Mormons, and there's the Jesus of those liberal Christians who don't believe he was born of a virgin, he was a good man. There's the Jesus of Islam, who they believe he was a prophet.

And there's the Jesus of many other religions who respect him as a very great philosopher or something like that. There's another Jesus. So when you say in the name of Jesus, which of these Jesuses are you talking about? You say the Jesus of the New Testament.

Hang on. Do you know that the first time the name, the meaning of that name is explained in Scripture is in Matthew 12:1? You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Not he will forgive their sins.

Of course he'll forgive them. But he will save them from their sins. There's a lot of difference between being forgiven your anger today, and you're not saved from your anger because you'll get angry tomorrow.

You can be forgiven your sexual lust and sinful thoughts today, but you'll fall again tomorrow. You're not saved from it. You're forgiven from it.

And many people are only forgiven. They live in an endless cycle of sinning, repenting, forgiveness. Sinning, repenting, forgiveness.

Never get out of that cycle. Jesus did not come. His name is not forgiver.

His name is Savior. He came to save his people from their sins. So when we pray in the name of Jesus, I'm saying, I'm praying in the name of one who came to save me from all my sins.

If you're not interested in being saved from all your sins, how can you use that name? Do you know why now many of your prayers are not answered? You're praying in the name of another Jesus who does not save from sin, who maybe just forgives or does something like that, but doesn't save from sin. It is another Jesus. I would encourage you to pray in the name of the real Jesus, who came to save you from all the sins in your life.

And if you pray in the name of that Jesus to the Father, your prayers get answered. Otherwise you live with unanswered prayer perpetually and keep on saying, oh, maybe it was not the will of God. When you pray a hundred prayers, none of them are answered.

No, it was not the will of God. Well, that's exactly what the devil wants you to say. And once in a year, maybe a prayer gets answered like some winning a lottery ticket or something.

You never know. Why is it? Is that how Jesus told us? You pray in my name to the Father and maybe once in a blue moon, he'll answer you. Is that what he said? And yet, if you're honest, isn't that your experience? That when you pray for something, it's exactly like buying a lottery ticket.

I hope you'll never buy it, but that's how it is. You don't know whether you'll win it or not. But that's not the way it's supposed to be because you're not praying in the name of the real Jesus.

How many of you can honestly say to the Lord, not to me, I want to be saved from every sin in my life. The definition of sin is Romans 3.23, coming short of the glory of God. The glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ.

John 1.14, full of grace and truth. So the definition of sin is coming short of Christ likeness. How many of you can honestly turn to the Lord and say, Lord, I want to be saved from every single un-Christlike habit in my life.

Every single un-Christlike attitude I have towards other people. Every single un-Christlike way of speaking. I want to be saved from it totally.

And I'm desperate, Lord. I mean it. I want to seek you for it.

I'm willing to fast and give up my food and pray to you for that. I don't think there are many people that desperate. You'd like it if God would give it to you if it doesn't cause too much inconvenience.

But you're not desperate. For the word of God says you shall seek me. The Lord says and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

And I can say every single person sitting here who has sought God with all his heart has found him. That may be only two or three. That's okay.

They found him. The rest will listen to messages. Be emotionally stirred for a moment and say, oh, that was a great message.

I love going to CFC to hear these stirring messages. Of course, I never get changed. I still fight at home.

I'm still fearful and anxious and worried and I grumble and complain and I still can't forgive certain people and I still gossip. And I'm pretty proud of myself and my children and all that. Of course, I don't want to get rid of all that.

Well, it's not really, there's not much difference then between you and the people in the world. Jesus is building his church. And I want to repeat what I said once before.

Just like God made Adam and the word in the Hebrew, by the way, in Genesis chapter one is, chapter two is God built Adam because he took mud, the same mud that was lying around on the ground and he built a body. And I've thought sometimes if there's a big hard lump of mud that refused to be broken, God would just throw it aside and take another bit. And he built Adam and then he breathed into him and Adam walked off.

What about the rest of the mud? That remained mud. It did have an opportunity to become part of Adam, but some of it was hard. Today, Jesus is picking up mud, building the body.

Some of them he finds too hard. They don't want to be. Okay.

One day he will come from heaven and the body will walk off and the rest of the mud will be left behind. I believe that. Yeah.

What was it that made, that makes the church have power to overcome the forces of spiritual death? I'll tell you in a little parable. If you kill a man completely, and if you make sure he's really dead, I don't mean whether he's pretending to be dead or half dead. If a man is killed completely, brain dead, heart dead, everything dead, you can't kill him again.

Isn't that right? That's simple. Even a child can understand it. You can totally kill a man only once.

That's the reason why the powers of spiritual death cannot overcome a true disciple of Jesus Christ because he's already died with Christ. And he accepts that position every day. He takes up his cross, like Jesus said, and dies to himself every day.

You can't kill him twice. The powers of spiritual death can't touch him because he's gone beyond death. And that's why we see something very interesting.

As I said, this is the first time that Jesus spoke about the church. And it was also the first time that he spoke immediately in the same message about the way of the cross. Isn't that significant? That he spoke about the church and the way of the cross together for the very first time, proving to me anyway that there's a link between the two.

Let me show you that. Matthew 16, 18. We saw how Simon Peter got a revelation from heaven that Jesus was the Christ.

And I believe some of you have seen Jesus, the real Jesus. Praise the Lord. And it's not your cleverness that enabled you to see him.

Certainly not my cleverness that I saw Jesus not as forgiver only but as Savior. It was a revelation from heaven. Really it was.

Because for so many years, I knew him only as forgiver. And I still remember the chair on which I was sitting when one day I suddenly saw the glory of the new covenant. Just like that, like a flash from heaven.

I'd been seeking it for a long time. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. And suddenly it flashed on me what the glory was.

I mean, it's not explanation. That's why I know that no matter how much I explain it, you won't get it. But if you seek God with all your heart, you'll suddenly get a flash from heaven in your heart and you'll know what it is.

Well, Peter saw that. Then Jesus said, I will build my church. And verse 21, from that time, from that time, from which time? From the time he said I'm going to build a church against which the powers of spiritual death will not overcome or overpower against them.

He said from that time, he began to show to his disciples that he is to suffer and be killed. But death would not have power over him. He would be raised up on the third day.

From that time, you see the connection between that and the gates of Hades and the powers of death cannot overcome the church because you will see that powers of spiritual death will not be able to overcome me. They'll try to. They'll kill me, but I'll be raised from the dead.

And that's what gives us authority. You see, the other thing we need to see here is how we have authority also to bind the satanic activities. And then Peter, now listen to this, this man who got revelation from heaven on Christ did not have revelation on the cross.

That can be your condition. You have seen who Jesus is, but you have not seen the way of the cross. Peter didn't because the same man who said, you're the Christ, and she said, you're blessed, now turns around and says, no, no, you're not going to go to the cross.

If he had revelation on the way of the cross, he'd say, great Lord, that's wonderful. But he didn't have revelation. He said, no, God forbid it.

It'll never happen to you. Even in Gethsemane, he didn't have revelation on that. He took out a sword to try and protect Jesus from being captured.

You know, you can have a lot of human love for Jesus like Peter had and have zero revelation on the cross. Some of these charismatic songs speak about a lot of human type of love for Jesus. It doesn't mean these, most of these people who sing it, I don't see much understanding of the way of the cross in them.

I think these old time men who wrote those hymns knew the way of the cross a lot more. That's why I sing those old time hymns more. A lot of today's songs are very sentimental and emotionally moving.

They don't drive you to the cross. We can see Jesus. I'm sure Peter had a tremendous amount of love for Jesus.

He could have said to him, how beautiful the sight of you must be and all that, but he didn't understand what it means to die. And that's how it is. He turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan.

See the contrast? One moment, blessed are you because the Father in heaven has revealed this to you. And the next moment, get away, Satan. How can the same man apply it to yourself, apply it to yourself? One moment, get such a commendation from Jesus, you, and you've seen how Jesus, you've seen who Jesus is.

And the next moment, the devil turns around to you and says, get away, you devil. You don't believe Jesus will ever say that to you? You think he loves you more than you love Peter? You gotta be off your head. Any man or woman who tries to avoid the way of the cross is being influenced by Satan.

And if you hear the voice of Jesus clearly, he'll tell you that. You are being influenced by the devil. Recognize it.

And the next thing, Peter, you're a stumbling block to me. How would you like Jesus saying to you, you're a stumbling block to me? I don't wanna hear it. You're not gonna help me build a church.

You're gonna be a hindrance to me to build a church. Why? Because you haven't seen the way of the cross. That's the way to build it.

You like all this pious and sentimental stuff, but you can't build a church with all that. It's great, that's necessary to get revelations. It's necessary to see Jesus.

It's necessary to be passionately devoted to Jesus. It's necessary to see the Father whom Jesus reveals. Yes, all that we've spoken so far, but there's something more.

From that time, when you've seen all that, the Lord tries to show you the way of the cross, and you say, I don't wanna go that way. You mean die to myself every day? Keep my mouth shut when somebody yells at me? Die to my rights? When my family members take the share of my property, just die and keep quiet? Oh no, I'm gonna fight for my rights. Go ahead.

You're a stumbling block to Christ. That's what He'll say to you. Don't imagine that you're gonna build a church not in a hundred years.

You're a stumbling block. If He said that to Peter, He'll say that to you. See, many of us have got an imbalanced Bible.

We like to read those passages like, Oh, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah. I've never seen such faith in Israel. And we don't like to read those other words where the same person, he says, Get behind me, Satan.

You're a stumbling block to me. We don't like to read that because we think, Oh, he'll never speak to me like that. He said that to Peter.

I'll tell you, Peter was a hundred times more devoted than most of us. He'd given up everything to follow Jesus. Didn't Jesus recognize that? I gave up my job to serve the Lord, but I, boy, I'll tell you, I've received some very, very strong rebukes from the Lord, more than perhaps any of you.

He does. You know why? It says in Revelation chapter 3, I think it's verse 19, As many as I love, I rebuke. When I was a young Christian, if you had asked me, How do you know Jesus loves you? I'd say John 3, 16.

God so loved the world. He gave his only son. That's why I know he loves me.

Today, if you ask me, How do you know Jesus loves you? I say Revelation 3, 19. He rebukes me. As many as I love, I rebuke.

That's how I know he loves me. I'm not a child. When I was a child, I thought like a child.

I spoke like a child, Paul says. When I've grown up, I put away childish things. Have you grown to the place where you can accept a rebuke from the Lord? You like those brothers who come and praise you? Oh, you're doing a great job.

Wonderful brother. You're a great brother. You're a great sister.

You love them, don't you? Those who come and say, they may be sincere and what they're saying may be right, but you like to hear that and you like to meditate on what they say. And one day, the same brother comes to you and says, you're a stumbling block to the church, brother. You're a big hindrance the way you live and the way you speak.

Sister, you're a gossiping, backbiting habit. You're a stumbling block to the church. You get a bit offended.

You don't want to hear that again. Therein lies the reason why there's been so little spiritual growth. You want to hear only commendation, but not rebuke.

You know, it's around the same time that we read a lot of disciples got offended with Jesus and left him. Let me show you this before getting there. You're not only you're a stumbling block to me, your mind is set on your own interests and not God's.

And that's the fundamental reason why God says I can never use you to build a church. Ah, you can go and attend church meetings. That there's no objection.

The devil attends every meeting in CFC. I hope you know that. He's been attending CFC for nearly 35 years.

He never misses a meeting. He doesn't even miss the Wednesday meeting. He doesn't miss the prayer meeting.

A lot of meetings you miss, the devil doesn't miss. Oh, catch him missing a meeting here. I'd say, Lord, what's happened to us? Have we backslidden? The devil stopped coming to our meetings? Yeah, the devil just leaves certain churches alone.

Said, oh, waste your time there. Nothing happens over there. I don't want our church to be in that condition.

So coming to meetings doesn't mean anything. During the week, the whole week, is your mind set on your interests or God's interests? The rebuke that the Lord gave to Peter, your mind is set on your man's human interests, not on God's interests. You're not seeking God's kingdom first.

You're seeking your own kingdom, your own interests. And that's why you're a stumbling block. And I believe it's true even after 20 centuries that every Christian, even if he's given up his job like Peter did, even if he's following Jesus, even if he's attending CFC, if his mind is set on his own interests and not God's interests, he is a stumbling block to the building of the church in this place.

But you will not hinder the building of the church in this place because there are some other brothers who are pretty wholehearted and the Lord is with them and they will overcome all the hindrance you bring with your human interests. The work will still be done. It's just that you will miss the privilege of being a part of building the church even though you sat here for so many years.

Think of it, brothers and sisters. Don't stand in heaven and regret. I was not one of those who, I mean, you may say, I was not one of those who thought that CFC was all preaching heresy.

I was one who believed this was the truth. I sat there so many years and now I discover I had no part in it because I lived there seeking my own interest all the time. I didn't realize, Lord, I was a stumbling block.

I didn't actually go and create confusion there. I don't think any of you cause confusion in this church, but if you're a member of this church and you seek your own interests, you're a stumbling block in some way. And the result is other people have got to work harder to overcome the problems you cause by your spirit.

And then, you know, just in case the disciples thought, well, this is just for Jesus to suffer and die, he went on to say in verse 24, if anyone wants to come after me, he also must deny himself and die. Take up his cross means die. You see, that's a very simple expression.

In those days, there were lots of people the Romans crucified. I mean, if you're living in Jerusalem, you'd regularly see on the street somebody carrying a cross and going around and, you know, that guy's said goodbye to his friends and he's going to be killed. That's the end.

Taking up the cross means the end of life. It is just an expression. It's like you say the fellow's going to the gallows.

Going to the gallows means what? That's the end. Or going to the electric chair or going to get a lethal injection or something. Different ways they kill people in different countries.

So it's not something that means just I'm just taking up the cross and suffering. It's death, death, death. If anyone wishes to come after me, verse 24, he must deny himself.

Deny himself means say no to self and die. Only then he can follow me. I believe the problem with many, many Christians, believers, they've accepted Christ, they want to follow him but they want to bypass this saying no to self and saying dying to self and try to follow and it doesn't work.

And if you found you're trying to follow Jesus unsatisfactory, discover the reason. The reason is here. You're not going the right way.

You're trying to follow Jesus along the broad way and you can't because he's not there. Jesus is on the narrow way. He himself denied himself and took up the cross and followed the way his father wanted.

Now he calls us to follow him. And then he said in verse 25, if you try to save your soul life, he's not talking here about being a martyr. There's something in us we want to preserve.

Our soul life, our personality, our reputation, our dignity as human beings. You want to preserve all that? Brother, you better go right out into the world. You're in the wrong place.

You can't be a disciple of Jesus and you want to preserve your reputation and your dignity and everything that's yours. You want to hold on to. You don't want anybody to say anything that will hurt you.

Brother, sister, you're in the wrong place. You should be in the world. You shouldn't be sitting here.

You're in the wrong place, let me tell you. Go to where you belong. Go to your friends who want to preserve their dignity and their reputation and their rights.

I have certain rights. You're not interested in dying, are you? Dying to your rights and dying to your reputation and dying to your dignity and dying to your own will and your own choices. You're trying to save your life.

You will lose it. Definitely. One day all those people who try to save their life, a lot of them will lose it in hell.

A few of them who make it to heaven will discover that heaven is a pretty unhappy place for them with the sorrow. A lot of people don't believe in this. I believe it with all my heart.

I don't want to get any surprise when I get to heaven. I believe I, for myself anyway, I'll have tremendous sorrow in heaven if I live my earthly life for myself. The one life God gave me to live for him, I chose to live for myself.

You think I'm not going to have regret on that in eternity? You don't know eternity then. How can it be? You think people will say, I'll just get saved the last minute before I die and live for myself completely. And just before I die, I'll live for myself.

Do you think the thief who died on the cross who went to paradise, you think he doesn't feel bad? Oh Lord, how sorry I am that I lived in sin all my life and I couldn't do a single thing for you and I died. But he will not have as much regret as people like you and me who had plenty of years to live after we accepted Christ and we still lived for ourselves. So I'm firmly convinced.

I don't have even 1% doubt of that in my mind that there'll be regret in the minds of many people for eternity in heaven as they see Jesus and say, Oh Lord, I wish I could live my life again. I wish I could have denied myself in those opportunities I had on earth. I wish I had chosen the way of uprightness and righteousness instead of the way of sin and compromise that other half-hearted believers were choosing.

I wish I had been a whole-hearted member of a church that was moving on in God's purposes than flitting here and there like going from one restaurant to another listening to good messages, eating good food. Lord, I wish I were a committed member of a church that was building your body. You don't have that regret.

I can only warn you when you stand at the judgment seat of Christ you discover that what I said was true. You can't turn around and say, Brother Zach, you never told us. Not a single person here will be able to say that.

I remember telling a brother who was sitting here in our church when I had to share some hard things with him, I said, Brother, I don't care whether you think I'm a hard man. In the day of judgment you will turn around and thank me. That's enough.

Today you don't understand. It's like, you know, when I would urge my children to do their homework and study hard, both my wife and I would tell them to study hard, to do well in your examinations because your whole future depends on that in terms of an earthly job. They may have thought, Dad and Mom are so hard, driving us to study.

Actually, you can say what you like. Years later, when you've got a good job, you'll thank me. That's enough.

I'm not going to be one of these soft-hearted parents who's seeking popularity with my children. Who is not concerned about what's good for them in their future. I've seen enough of these soft-hearted parents and the damage they've done to their children.

So, this is mine. That future is only here on Earth. Think of something which is eternal.

Dear brothers and sisters, our life on Earth is far too serious for us to take lightly. Imagine if your father spent a hundred thousand rupees, not every year, but every month, to give you a college education for four years and you wasted that time. Boy, how disappointed your dad would be.

And that's how Jesus has invested his blood and his life so that we can live in a way that will bring glory to God. And think of the disappointment that's his when he sees the way a lot of believers live. If you seek to save your life, you'll lose it.

But, if you're willing to lose your life, this, Lord, for your sake, I'm willing to give up my reputation. For your sake, I'm willing to give up my dignity. I don't care how people treat me.

For your sake, I'm willing to give up my name and fame and money and time and energy and even my health, if need be. For your sake, for the building of your church, I will not seek my own convenience in anything. You know what will happen? He says, you'll find it.

You'll find that life eternally. Then in that context, it says, he's talking about believers. We use that word to unbelievers, but he's speaking to disciples.

You disciples, what will it profit you if you gain the whole world? And eternally, you have lost the life that you could have in heaven. What can you give in exchange for your soul? After receiving such a strong rebuke from Jesus, because around the same time, in terms of time chronology, that we read in John chapter six, Jesus turning to his disciples and saying in John six, verse 67, it says in verse 66, many of Jesus' disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore because they were offended. They were offended with what Jesus preached.

And do you know what he preached in John six? He preached about the cross. He said in John chapter six, you read verse 53, truly I say to you, truly, truly, whenever Jesus said truly, truly, those were some of his important words. Truly, truly, I say to you, you must be born again.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you've got no life in you. If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have eternal life. And I'll raise him up on the last day because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

He keeps on at it. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. And again, he says in verse 57, the last part, if you eat me, you'll also live because of me.

This is the bread like which the fathers ate. And when the disciples heard this, this is not the Pharisees, verse 20, 60, 60. These are his disciples, not the 12 apostles, some of the others.

There were many other disciples. When they heard this, he said, this is a difficult statement. Who can listen to this? Who can listen to eating his flesh and drinking his blood? And Jesus was aware that his disciples grumbled and he said, this has caused you to stumble when I say eat my flesh and drink my blood.

And just by the way, I want to tell you, this has got nothing to do with partaking in the communion. That is the craziest lie that the devil has put upon Christians to think that this is referring to taking part in the bread and the cup. Tell me honestly, when you eat the bread, does it taste like human flesh? Be honest.

When you drink the cup, does it taste like human blood? Be honest. It's not the physical flesh or blood of Jesus. Don't live in a delusion.

What was he talking about? Here it is. Does this cause you to stumble? Verse 63, the last part. The words that I have spoken are spirit and life.

I'm not talking about this flesh and this blood. There's some spiritual meaning and he didn't explain it. He just left it at that.

But there are some of you I know who do not believe. To whom is he talking? Disciples. Imagine Jesus turning around to some of his disciples and saying, some of you do not believe this.

I believe he says that to his disciples today. Some of you don't believe that the way of the cross is the way of life. I can show you, I think 90% or 95% of believers don't believe that the way of the cross is the way of life.

That's why they don't die in their daily life. That's why in their husband-wife relationship, they don't die. If they died, life would be more peaceful at home.

That's why there's so much conflict among believers. That's why so many people get offended. That's why so many people are lazy to come to big part in the work in the church.

That's why people tell lies. I'll tell you how. They give their name for cleaning the hall and they don't turn up.

Liars. They give their name, write it down, saying I will volunteer to clean the hall and they don't turn up. Liars.

The Bible says all liars will go to hell and don't tell me in that day that I didn't warn you. Now, I'll tell you the people are not liars. Those who didn't put their name there, they're not liars.

They were honest. I have no interest in cleaning the hall. I come here to listen to messages and I go home.

Brother, you're honest. You may not be spiritual, but at least you're honest. But the liars who act spiritual, where was the hope for them? Hell.

Without a doubt, every liar will go to hell. I believe that with all my heart. I'm scared to tell a lie.

I'm scared to give my name for something and not turn up. I'm surprised how so many people do that. And they've been doing it for many years.

No fear of God. The words that I speak are spirit and life. Jesus was speaking about he's giving his flesh and his blood for the sins of the world, dying.

And he was saying that when you eat my flesh and drink my blood, means you must take part in that death yourself. If you want to have spiritual life. But some of you don't believe.

You don't believe that. You don't believe the way of the cross, the way of life. But Jesus knew from the beginning, verse 64, those who did not believe, he knew that from the beginning.

And I'll tell you something. I don't know all the people sitting here, but Jesus knows every one of us through and through. I believe he's here right now.

And he says, I know those who are sitting here who really believe with all their hearts that the way of death itself is the way of life. And you have chosen it. And I know the others who have come here just to listen to a good sermon and who get stirred by it and go back without any change in their life.

The Lord says, I know. And I say, Lord, what am I supposed to do about it? You don't know how to do anything. Don't judge anyone.

I don't judge anybody either because I wait until they die. After they die comes the judgment. And many people got offended when they heard all this.

Verse 66, they withdrew. They wouldn't walk with him anymore. Maybe they got offended that he didn't explain it.

You know, Jesus doesn't explain many things because he already knows. What's the use of explaining something to a person who's got no interest in following? Is it any use explaining the use of a machine to somebody who's not interested in using that machine? Waste of time. Explaining the use of a computer with all that to a person who's not interested.

Waste of time. Jesus doesn't explain the way of the cross to people who are not really interested in giving up their own life. No, he doesn't.

It's a waste of time. Then he's got these 12 people left behind. All the others left.

To me, I say John chapter 6 is one of those wonderful chapters. I really love it. This begins with verse 5. A large crowd and ends with 12 people.

And I say, if you're going to build a church and unfortunately you've got a huge crowd of people coming there and you want to know how to reduce this huge crowd to 12 people who want to build a church I'll tell you, preach the cross. Preach the cross! That'll reduce it to those who are really serious. So when I see the crowds multiplying here I'm getting a bit scared actually to tell you honestly.

I say, what's happening? Are we preaching the cross? You mean all these people who come here now are serious about dying to themselves every day and following Jesus? I have a big question mark about it. I hope so. I'd be excited if it were true.

I have some serious doubts about it. Because the way to life is narrow and few there be that find it. And then he sees these 12 people.

Imagine such a popular miracle worker like Jesus having hundreds of thousands of people there and he just fed about 10,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish earlier in the chapter and then all that 10,000 dwindles down to 12. Can you picture a pastor? A pastor of a mega church 10,000 people and he preaches the truth and it suddenly becomes 12. Not in 6 years but in one day.

Next Sunday there are only 12 people at the meeting and 9,988 empty chairs. What will he say? He'll say, I hope you 12 fellows also won't go, please. He doesn't say that.

Jesus was so different. Do you also want to go? I like that. I want to follow Jesus as a preacher.

To say when there are only 12 people left do you guys want to go? Welcome. We're not going to change the message. You want to go, you go.

Death to self! And Simon Peter he gets revelation. This man who didn't get revelation Matthew 16, just a few days later, maybe he thought about it. I think he went home and thought about it.

Why did Jesus call me a devil? Am I the devil? Why did he say I'm seeking my own interest? I thought I gave up my job. But Jesus must be right. There must be something wrong with me.

It's always good to take that position. And the next time he hears about the cross, he says 68 Lord, to whom shall we go? These are the words of eternal life. When you call me the devil those are the words of eternal life.

Blessed is a man who can receive correction even if he's called the devil. You're a stumbling block. You're seeking your own interests.

Imagine if an elder brother came to you and said, you are Satan. You are not you are speaking on behalf of Satan. That's not what Jesus told Peter.

Get behind me, Satan. You're a stumbling block to me. You're seeking your own interests.

And you go home and instead of getting offended and instead of saying, I better go to another church. I'm never going to go back to that church. You go home and you humble yourself like Peter and say, Lord that was a godly man who told me that.

I don't want to despise it. There must be some truth in it. Please show me.

You gave me a revelation on Jesus as Christ, the son of the living God, but this is another area. I don't seem to have revelation. Give it to me.

And the Father gave him revelation so that the next time Jesus spoke about it, he said, Lord, now I got it. I got it. These are the words of eternal life.

This is the way to eternal life. This way of the cross is dying to myself. And we could say, blessed are you, Simon, because you got another revelation from the Father.

But there was another one who was still hanging around, pretending to stick around with Jesus, and that was Judas Iscariot. And so he said, yeah, there are 12 of you, but I can still see one of you as a devil. Why

is the way of the cross so important in building the church? I told you the church is built through resurrection power.

You can't build the church through human planning and scheming and all that. You have to have the resurrection power of Jesus Christ, and there is no resurrection without death. If there was no cross, there would be no resurrection.

There's a difference between resurrection and just being raised from the dead, like Lazarus. There's another word in English for that, resuscitation, which is not resurrection. It's just raising a man who was dead three days ago, and a few years later, he dies again.

But resurrection is different. When Jesus is raised from the dead, death has no more power over him. Death had power over Lazarus.

Death had power over the son of that widow of Nain, but death had no power over Jesus. That's resurrection, where you come to a life where death has no power over you. In that he died to sin, it says in Romans 6, he died once.

Death has no more power over him. Turn to Romans chapter 6. This is so important towards building a New Testament church. Romans in chapter 6, verse 8, 9, about Jesus.

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, now you can't say that about Lazarus, you can't say that about all the people raised from the dead in the Bible, but with Jesus, it was different. Being raised from the dead is never to die again. Death no longer is master over him.

Death cannot have any power over him. Spiritually, that can apply to us too. Verse 8, if we have died with Christ, we shall live with him.

That means death will not have any power over me. The forces of spiritual death will not have power over me. So God finds one brother who's chosen the way of death, died consistently, and the more he chooses that way of death, the more he experiences the power of resurrection in different areas of his life, and death cannot have power over him.

The devil's trying his best, but death can't have power over him. Like they say, water rolling off a duck's back. You can pour water on a duck, it doesn't make any difference.

Pour it on ice and you get wet. But on a duck, it just rolls off its back and death doesn't have any power over him because he's come to resurrection life in certain areas. I have not come to resurrection life in my physical body, and none of us have.

One day we will, if you are faithful. But there are areas in my life inwardly where I've already experienced resurrection power. Certain areas where death cannot do anything to me.

Forces of spiritual death, for example, in the area of getting offended. It's one of the first areas where we can be free completely, where you just cannot get offended anymore. You just cannot hate anybody anymore.

You know where death, the devil tries to get you to hate someone? It's gone. That area's gone. Once upon a time, it was very easy to hate people.

So there are areas in your life where resurrection power takes over, and death has no more power. Now it's possible to backslide and go right back, but if you're faithful, you can remain there and can grow and grow and grow and grow. Death no longer has power.

God gets another sister here, another brother here, another sister here. That's the real church. And I tell you, that's a very small group in the midst of what we call CFC.

Not everybody in CFC is being built together like that. I know that. Because I've seen their lives.

I've seen their lives through many years. Many of them still get offended. Many of them still get upset and angry.

I don't know. I think some of them may be doing internet pornography. I don't go snooping into their lives.

But those people are people over whom death has got power. They come and sit here and come along for the conferences and think they're okay. They're not okay.

But God's got a few here and there who are faithful in their life and who are building a testimony. I don't know who they are. God knows and God sees invisibly in the midst of all the mud lying around there.

He picks up a few and makes Adam. It's like that in the midst of all the mud. Everybody looks holy and all that.

But in the midst of it, he's building a body. And I tell you, it's those people who are preserving this church in life. One day you'll see it.

One day you'll see it. That everybody got the benefit of these few people. It's like in Gideon's army, there were 32,000 people and God said, send them all away home, those who are scared and those who are not wholehearted.

Finally, he was left with 300. 300 out of 32,000 you read in Judges in chapter 6 and 7. And that's less than 1%. Less than 1%.

If CFC has got 400 members, including children and all, how much is 1%? Four. That's enough. Give me four brothers or sisters here who are radical, wholehearted, who choose the way of death consistently and I tell you the devil will never be able to get far in this church.

That's enough. I'm not looking for a great crowd. The others can come and listen to the messages and go home.

I wish the number would increase because then we could bless so many others. This is how a new covenant church is built. It's not built by all those who come to the meetings.

It's not built by all those who break bread. It's not built by all those who attend the conferences. It's built by those who have chosen like Peter the way of death and say, these are the words of eternal life.

Blessed are you because you not only got revelation on Christ but you got revelation on the way he went. The way he went. He chose to die every day to his own will all through 33 years.

This is what it means when it says he never sinned. Shall I explain to you when it says Jesus never sinned? It means in other words, let's put it like this, Jesus was tempted but he never sinned. Let me

explain it in simple words.

He was tempted to do his own will every day but he never did his own will a single time. He did the Father's will every time. He said no to his own will.

That's the cross. So Jesus took up the cross every day for 33 and a half years. That's why he tells us, take it up every day.

That natural reaction that you want to have when you're tempted by a person or by some picture or something you say no. By the power of the Holy Spirit. You need the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's why they couldn't do it in the Old Testament. Now we can. The Holy Spirit always led Jesus to the cross.

One last verse and then I'll close. Have you read this verse? Luke chapter 4 verse 1. Let me read, just leave a few words in between and read verse 1 and 2. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil.

It's there in Scripture. Have you ever been led by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil? Or you don't believe the Holy Spirit does such things? He led Jesus to be tempted by the devil. To be tempted to do his own will, but he always said no, I'll do my Father's will.

He said, turn the stones into bread, that's my will. No, I will not do it. What does the Father say? Man shall live by the word of God, by the Father's will.

He lived like that. You and I will also be led by the Spirit. If you're filled with the Spirit, you're led by the Spirit.

To face situations where you are tempted to do your own will, and you say no. What will be the result? Verse 14, He returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit. And that's what will happen to you and me.

And he said, he went into the church synagogue and said, the Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach the gospel, to set the captives free. That's how he started building the church, and that's how you and I can also be wonderful co-workers with Christ, men and women, to build the church of Jesus Christ, anointed by the Holy Spirit. But first, the Holy Spirit will lead you to be tempted to do your own will.

Make sure you seek the power of the Holy Spirit not to do your own will, starting from today. God bless you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I realize this is not something that can be explained by human words, for it's a mystery. The way of the cross. I know it's a mystery because so many believers don't seem to have found it, despite their hearing it so often and so much.

But I pray that you will find in our midst some who seek you with all their heart so that they will understand this mystery and live their earthly lives in the only way you want your children to live. So that they can be co-workers with you and have an abundant entrance into your kingdom one day. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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