

Taking Up the Cross Daily

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the Bible and taking up the cross daily, which means obeying God's will, not our own desires, and requires faith, trust, and surrender to God's plan.

Duration: 1:03:54

Scripture: Proverbs 15:1, Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 16:17, John 6:38, John 7:37-39, Romans 8:13, 2 Corinthians 4:10, Philipians 2:8

Topics: "The Cross", "Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the distinction between the Old Covenant and the Old Testament, highlighting the need to learn from the mistakes of Israel and to seek revelation from the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant. It stresses the significance of yielding to God's will daily, taking up the cross, and allowing the life of Jesus to manifest through dying to self. The speaker encourages believers to follow Jesus' example of humility and obedience, leading to a transformed life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

One of the mistakes we can make after some time of being a Christian is to imagine that we chose the Lord instead of the Lord choosing us. And it is because that is deeply rooted in us that we become proud. That happened to Israel also.

Why is it three quarters of our Bible is Old Testament? See, we know old covenant is abolished. Not the Bible, but that covenant which God made with Israel, that is abolished. But what the people call Old Testament, there is no word in the Bible which says Old Testament.

Nowhere in the original Bible, it doesn't say Genesis to Malachi is Old Testament. Man has put a title there, Old Testament. There is only one Bible.

66 books are all Bible. And all are necessary for us. But when we say the old covenant is established, we are not talking about those 39 books.

No, we are talking about the covenant God made with Israel. There are so many words which we now have a wrong understanding because of the way it is used in Christianity. For example, 99% of Christians, if you tell them church, they think of a building.

Or some denomination, martyrdom of church or Methodist church. We have got used to that language that we cannot understand what the Bible means when it talks about church. And since about 90% of Christians are all baptized as babies, The word baptism means sprinkling a baby.

The devil has changed the meanings of these words by Christian tradition. You know, Jesus in his life on earth, he was always fighting against the traditions of the Jews. Many many things like this we have got a wrong idea.

Because of the way it is being used in Christianity. Here is another word which many of you will be surprised is never found in the New Testament, never found in the Bible. Nowhere does it say in the Bible that a man is a pastor of a church.

That word pastor is never referring to the leader of a church. Not in a single place. How is it thousands of people use that word now? It has become a tradition in Christianity.

If you read in Acts of the Apostles, nobody was appointed as a pastor in any church. Paul went around appointing elders, always more than one. But even in many believers churches, they still use the word pastor.

They like to have that title. I am just giving you a few examples like this. So when we talk about old covenant, people immediately think 39 books of the Bible.

Where do they read that? Where in the Old Testament is it written that the first 39 books are Old Testament? Not only man in the front of the Bible, they have put Old Testament. So, people have asked me this question. Brother Zach, you are preaching Old Covenant is abolished.

We don't need these 39 books. I said that is not Old Covenant. That is Bible.

Old Covenant is what God made with Israel. That is abolished. Why is the Old Testament, if Old Covenant is abolished, why has God made three quarters of the Bible Old Testament? That is to teach us the failures of Israel.

I have learnt a lot from those 39 books. I am not under the old covenant. I am under the new covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ.

I have nothing to do with that covenant God made on Sinai through Moses. I studied the old, the 39 books in the Bible very carefully. Why? See, a wise man will learn from the mistakes of other people.

And ordinary man will learn from his own mistakes. Foolish man will not learn from his own mistakes. But a wise man will learn watching the mistakes of other people.

So that he doesn't make the same mistake himself. That is why I read Old Testament. What are the mistakes Israel made? One was to bring so many traditions into their religion which is not given by God.

And that led them astray into so many ways. It is because of those traditions that they rejected Jesus Christ. Have you ever thought why did the Pharisees want to kill Jesus Christ? They studied the Bible more than anybody else on earth at that time.

All the 39 books spoke about Jesus Christ. The Bible of the Israelites was the first 39 books. And every book spoke about Jesus.

Starting with the seed of the woman in Genesis. Right up to Malachi. But when Jesus came into their midst, they called him the prince of devils.

See, a man who did not read the Bible like a Roman soldier, he said, this is the son of God at the cross. So, the man who did not read the Bible called him the son of God. People who read the Bible called him prince of devils.

How is that? Is it because these Pharisees were stupid? Everybody knows that the Jewish people are some of the cleverest people in the world. They were very clever people. But with that cleverness, they read the Bible and found Jesus is the devil.

What can I learn from that? That if I approach the Bible with my cleverness, I will go equally astray. Today, we will not call Jesus the prince of devils because we know who he is. But we can have a wrong understanding of the Holy Spirit.

There is so much of so-called operation of the Holy Spirit in so many groups today. I am convinced some of it is from God, most of it is from the devil. How will you know which is which? If you go by your cleverness, you will go completely wrong like the Pharisees.

How did Peter, who did not even know 1% of the Bible as the Pharisees, recognize Jesus as the son of God? How did Peter, who did not even know 1% of the Bible as the Pharisees, recognize Jesus as the son of God? See Matthew 16 verse 17. See what it says there. Simon, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father in heaven.

That means you did not know I am the son of God by your human cleverness. But my father in heaven revealed this to you. He gave you a revelation.

We need to differentiate between revelation and understanding. For a child to learn 2 plus 2 is 4, he doesn't need revelation. He needs understanding, cleverness in the mind.

You can study so much in mathematics. You can get a PhD in mathematics. But if you are not clever, you can't go so far.

And people think that we can study the Bible also like that. In the Old Testament, this word revelation is not there. In the Old Testament, you did not need revelation.

You just need a good mind, read and it will tell you what to do. Leviticus 11, you cannot eat this food, you can eat this food. You must be circumcised on 8th day.

7th day is a sabbath. You don't need revelation. Even if you are an unconverted godless man, you can understand that.

Because all you need is good mind. 7th day is a sabbath. 8th day you must be circumcised.

But in the New Covenant, there is a word called revelation. That comes through the Holy Spirit. Why is it there was no revelation in the Old Testament? Because man's spirit was blocked.

You know, in the tabernacle, there was an outer court, holy place, most holy place. That is like man's body, soul and spirit. Outer court everybody could see.

Body everybody can see. There were two covered parts in the tabernacle. Holy place, most holy place.

Ours there are two covered parts, soul and spirit. Nobody can see it. And in that tabernacle, between holy place and most holy place, there was a thick veil.

Nobody could go inside. Same way, soul and spirit, there is something that is dividing the two. Something blocking the spirit.

Showing us, the Holy Spirit cannot go into our spirit. In the entire Old Testament, the Holy Spirit could not go inside anybody. But he used many people, the Holy Spirit was upon many people and blessed many people.

It seems like this. If you pour water on this saucer, you can keep on flowing water. Rivers can flow around.

Satisfying the thirst of many people. But not one drop will go inside. This is how man's spirit was.

It was blocked. But the Holy Spirit came upon them, came upon Elijah, came upon David, Samuel, John the Baptist. In none of them it went inside.

But from outside they blessed thousands. When Jesus died, that veil was torn. The way into the spirit was open now.

The Holy Spirit could come in and fill from inside and flow outside and bless millions of people. So, the first person who experienced that was Jesus Christ. From within him the rivers flowed.

And he said, if you thirst for this life, and you believe in me, from your innermost being also rivers of living water will flow. It's not only for some special preachers or anybody. Everyone who believes in him, see John 7, 37, 39.

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. If he believes in me. So, what are the two requirements? Thirst, faith.

That's all. What will happen? Verse 38, from his innermost being rivers of living water will flow. This he spoke on the Holy Spirit, verse 39.

And verse 39, the spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified. See, this confuses many people. Then how did the spirit come upon Gideon and David and Samuel and Elijah and all these people? It came like this on top.

And they blessed thousands. The water flowed from there to bless thousands. When it says spirit was not given like this, in which way? Verse 38, from the innermost being for the spirit to flow out.

That could not happen in the Old Testament. But when the veil was rent, then the Holy Spirit come and bubble up and flow. So, what is the difference between this type of Holy Spirit using people and with the veil removed, the Holy Spirit using people? I'll tell you.

See, Samson, mightily the Holy Spirit used him. It was all from the outside flowing. But if you looked inside his heart, it's full of adultery.

People ask, how can God use a man who is so lustful in his heart? His spirit was only upon him. Do you know that the Bible says that the Holy Spirit came upon Balaam? It's quite an interesting verse. See, it's

Numbers chapter 24.

In Numbers 22 onwards you read about Balaam. He was a lover of money. But when Balaam, the king Balaam offered him more money, he went.

And then it says in Numbers 24, verse 2, This Balaam lifted up his eyes and the spirit of God came upon him. This guy went after money. God had told him initially, don't go.

But when Balaam offered, Balak, the king offered more money, he said, okay, I'll go. But if you read there, when he sought the Lord a second time, verse 20, okay, he said, 22-20, 22-20, Balaam said, okay, God said to Balaam, If they come with you today, go with them. But then later on you see, one angel came and stood in front of the donkey and did not allow him to go.

This is a question. Why did God first say, go, and no, don't go, then he said, okay, you can go. Because earlier on, in Numbers 22-12, God said, don't go.

Because these are my people. You cannot curse them. But verse 20, he says, go.

But then the angel tries to stop him. There is a very important lesson for you and me to learn here. When you sincerely seek the will of God about anything, he will tell you clearly what to do.

That was clear, don't go. But then when Balaam came and offered more money, the love of money made him seek the will of God again. We got to learn from that.

If God has shown you his will concerning something, sometimes clearly written in scripture. But you want to do something which is not exactly like that. You want to do something slightly different.

Even though you have seen clearly what God wants in the Bible, we go back to God again. Lord, tell me, what should I do? And God sees in your heart that you want something else. God says, okay, go.

That's not his will. But he will not force you. God doesn't make man into a robot.

Okay, if you want to go, you go. Balaam, I can see you are interested in money, go. It's a very dangerous thing when God permits you to do something which he already told you sometimes not to do.

Because that will be calamity in your life. See in Psalm 106, God used to give them manna every day. This is referring to Israel in the wilderness.

It says in verse 9, he rebuked the Red Sea, dried it up. Saved them from their enemies, verse 10. And then, once they got tired of, why this manna, manna, manna every day, no change in the diet.

As if God did not know what is good for them. We can teach this lesson to our children when they complain about food. They said, no, we want meat.

Where to get meat in the wilderness? What did God do? He made millions of quail birds drop down. And they fell down there and they got meat. It was not God's will for them.

I mean, if it was God's will, he would have given them one day manna, one day quail, one day quinnam, one day quail. You could have done that. But they craved for it.

We want, we want. That's what's written here. Verse 13.

They did not wait for his counsel. But they craved in the wilderness and tempted God saying, we want quail, we want meat, we want meat. What did God do? Verse 15.

He gave them their request. But he sent a wasting disease among them along at the same time. The Malayalam is much more accurate than the English here.

It says in my margin, their soul became thin. They got what they wanted for their body. But their soul dried up.

That's what happened to Balaam. You want to go? I can see that you are interested in money. Go.

He gave Balaam his request. His soul dried up. You think that can happen to us? Definitely.

You know something is God's will. And you don't do it. I'll tell you what happened to me when I was converted.

I grew up in the Orthodox Church. When I was a small baby, they sprinkled water on my head. I was born again when I was 19.

And I didn't take baptism. The people in the Jacobite church said, See, these brethren people, they are already converted. The Jacobite church only people are not converted.

So, if you take baptism, the Jacobite church will throw you out. You won't be able to witness to them. But if you don't take baptism, you can stay here.

They will accept you. And you can preach the gospel to so many people who are not knowing the Lord. These are some born again people in the Jacobite church who told me.

So, I was young. I thought, yeah, that's right. Here is the place where I need to preach the gospel.

I'll stay here. So, I studied the Bible. And I found not a single case of child baptism in the Bible.

Everything was believers getting baptized. But I used my reason. And I said, yeah, God will understand.

My motive is good. I am trying to witness to these people. So, I didn't take baptism for one and a half years after I was converted.

I was going all those one and a half years to a brethren assembly. I never went to the Jacobite church. But I thought I could witness to them if I don't take baptism.

So, one day when I was praying, I felt the Lord saying to me, If you are not listening to me, why should I listen to you? I told you to take baptism. You studied the Bible and you found it is true. No, you have to choose.

You are going to please man or please God? Then I decided, I don't care which church throws me out. I am going to obey God. And if I had not done that in 1961, 55 years ago, I would have been dragging a chain on my foot for 55 years.

I would not have been able to run the race. I learned something that time. If I see something in the word of God, I don't care whether Jacobite church or Pentecostal church or any other church teaches it.

I will not care. I will obey God's word. That was my greatest salvation.

After that I did not care which church preached anything. I don't see it in the word of God. I will not accept it.

If I see it in the word of God, I will preach it even if I am the only person on earth preaching it. See, when I began to preach about new covenant and all about 40 years ago, And about victory over sin, rejoicing always, overcoming anger, giving up all murmuring and complaining, keeping a pure thought life, building the body of Christ, taking up the cross everyday. All these things are from the New Testament.

But many people are not preaching it. It's just like, as I told you, some hospitals only eye department and ear department. That's all.

Somebody has a heart trouble, where does he go? They say, we only deal with eye and ear. This is the condition of so many Christians. And I remember when I started preaching these things, it was like a strange doctrine to many people.

When Martin Luther preached salvation is by faith 500 years ago, All the Catholics thought this is false teaching. He really had to know God to stand against that whole millions of people. See, what a blessing it was to us that he stood like that.

You know, God has always looked for people who will stand up for him. The Bible says, the last days will be like the days of Noah. But there was a man in Noah's time, Noah, who stood up for the Lord.

God wants people like Noah today also. So, I remember the Lord said to me, when we started preaching these things, everybody in India turns against you. Will you still continue to stand for these truths? I said, sure.

Even if my wife and I are the only ones left, we will stand. I want to ask you, can you stand alone for God? In Bahrain or India or anywhere, supposing everybody turns against you and says, what you are believing is wrong, You know the Lord so well that you say, you can believe that. I know what I believe.

Or do you believe these things because there are at least a few other brothers here who believe this? Brother Zak is a God-fearing man. He believes it. So, it must be right.

All this is no use. It will not help you to know God. Once I said in my Bangalore church, I said, supposing one day I get up and say like this.

Brothers, all these things I taught you for so many 20-35 years, I now realize it's all wrong. So, I am giving it all up. This new covenant and victory over sin, now I realize it's all my fault.

What will you say? You must know the Lord so well. You must say, Brother Zak, we will pray for you. But we are not going to shake just because you fell away.

That is how strongly you must know the Lord. That is my desire. Not that you lean upon me.

I didn't have anybody to lean upon in India. I said, Lord, I will lean upon you. That's what made me strong that it didn't matter if whole of India turned against me.

That is how I began to grow. I want to say to you, you must lean upon the Lord. You must be convinced of these things.

Then you will grow. The Lord sees your heart. If he sees like Balaam, you have got some other desire.

Or you are not satisfied with the manner God gives you, you are craving for something else. God will give you. But your soul will become thing.

Don't think that because God gave you something, that was his will. And God allowed Balaam to go, it was not his will. When God gave quails to the Israelites, that was not his will.

What we learn from that is, sometimes God gives you something you desperately ask for, even though it is not his will. That is why Jesus taught us through his life. I came from heaven never to do my own will.

See John 6.38 John 6.38 I came only to do the will of my father. You know this is the meaning of taking up the cross everyday. Many years ago, in Bangalore, they had an interdenominational study meeting one day.

I was also invited. Some leaders and all were there. And they said, today we want to discuss, what does it mean to take up the cross? The leader said, we are going to break up into ten groups.

You are all Bible teachers and all. Let's discuss this. And we will discuss for half an hour and then send your conclusions.

And we will read it out. What does it mean to take up the cross? I was not a leader of a group. I was just listening.

And at the end of half an hour, we collected all the ten reports. After reading all this, the leader said, everybody's conclusion is, we can't really say what it means to take up the cross. These are Christian leaders in Bangalore.

It's not a story. It actually happened. I was there.

The cross means, I don't do my own will. I don't make my own choice. I choose what God wants.

And I have to make that choice every day. See, today somebody gets angry with me, shouts at me. I have to decide now.

What I want to do, reply the way I feel. Say, no, no, not my choice, Lord. What do you want me to say to him? Maybe the Lord will say, give him a gentle reply.

He says, a gentle answer turns away anger. I used to see this on the roads in Bangalore. For 42 years, I rode a scooter in Bangalore.

I never had an accident by God's grace. Thanks to all the angels who took care of me. But sometimes somebody would cross in front of me and our scooters would touch each other.

Nothing serious. There is a rule in Bangalore roads. Whoever shouts loudest, he is right.

Anything like this happens, they start shouting. Even though it's his fault. So, as soon as this happened, even though it's his fault, I would say, I am sorry, sir.

He says, no, it's quite okay. He can go. I can go.

But I see other people when they collide like that. One fellow raises his voice, another fellow raises his voice. Come back after 5 minutes.

We are still discussing rules. Whatever. Every day, we had to take up the cross.

I didn't start like this. I was as defeated as anybody else in the beginning. I didn't fight, yell on the road.

I would only gently say, who gave you a license? Even though I didn't raise my voice. The Lord said, that is not Christ-like. It is insulting him saying, who gave you a license? So, I said, Lord, I want to be like Jesus on the roads.

So, I stopped even asking that. See, Jesus took the blame for other people's sins on the cross. Why can't you take a blame for that accident on the road? See, I am sorry.

That is to follow Jesus. That humbles our pride. Because our pride says, why should I say I am mistaken? I am not mistaken.

Those of you who are married, think of all the quarrels you have had with your husband or wife. Isn't it all a question of who is right? Just like on the roads. Why not say, okay, maybe I am wrong.

Keep quiet. Gentle answer turns away wrong. Do you know that verse? It's not my word.

It's from the Bible. Proverbs 15 verse 1. A gentle answer turns away wrong. Keep that in mind always.

But in order to do that, you have to die. Because there is something in you that says, I am not going to let him feel that he didn't do anything wrong. Take up the cross.

Die. That is how the Holy Spirit teaches us to follow Jesus. See, the reason I mention this is, yesterday I said how the Lord wants to build a body.

In a body, each must be willing to give up their own will. That is how this body functions so well. See, I'll give you one example.

See this elbow. See how my hand moves up and down. It looks so simple.

There is no noise or any creaking or anything. Those who have arthritis, it begins to creak. This is a picture of two believers working together.

No fight, no noise, no problem. Husband and wife. Noise means there is some arthritis in your marriage.

Normally, there is no noise. But see what happens. Invisibly, inside something is happening.

There is a muscle here on top saying, I am going to pull. And the muscle here says, okay, I will yield. You pull.

Supposing this muscle also says, no, no, no, I also want to pull. My hand will be like this forever. Now when the other muscle at the other side says, I am going to pull now, This muscle says, sure, go ahead.

This is automatic. See how God has made this body so beautiful. This is why the church is called the body of Christ.

No noise, no arthritis. One yields and one pulls. Other time the other pulls, this yields.

It's not only here. See, even the fingers. One yields, the other pulls.

So, this is how we must remember. This is the meaning of the cross. One is pulling, the other says, sure, I die, I yield to you.

It's happening all over our body. When we bend our knees or bend our body, something is pulling and something is yielding. What a wonderful marriage yours will be if it's like that.

What is it that prevents you from yielding? It's your pride. The pride we got from Adam. The cross puts that to death.

See Philippians chapter 2, Philippians 2, it says here in verse 8, He humbled himself to the death of the cross. Verse 8. He humbled himself and became obedient to the death of the cross. So, it's that humility that led him to the cross.

And it is your lack of humility that prevents you from dying on the cross. Jesus said, I can call 72,000 angels right now if I want to protect myself. I will not do it.

I will go to the cross. And he said, follow me. So, to follow him means, when we come into some situation where somebody is trying to harm us, If we want, we can also speak 72,000 words in defense of ourselves.

We can't call 72,000 angels, but we have got 72,000 words. And we don't die. So, we don't experience this wonderful life.

There is no resurrection without death. There are some believers who experience resurrection life in their spirit. It is the life of God that overcomes the life of Adam.

And God gives it to those who are willing to die. The others will live with an Adamic life all their days. I was born with an Adamic life.

I don't want to die with that Adamic life. Before I die, I want to exchange that for the life of Jesus. So, every time I get an opportunity, I want to give the life of Adam to death.

Control my tongue. Control my thoughts. Control my reactions.

Say, Lord, I will die. And God gives me the resurrection life of Jesus. And over a period of time, like the Israelites drove out the Canaanites and occupied their land, We can drive out this Adamic life and the life of Jesus.

This is how the life of the Holy Spirit can, the life of Jesus can flow from within us. So, the spirit leads us to the cross. Look at one last verse.

Romans 8 and verse 13. The last part. If through the Holy Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

The deeds of the body that come through your eyes looking at something which you shouldn't look at. Or through your tongue wanting you to say something which you shouldn't say. The Holy Spirit will prompt you at that time.

Don't say that. Don't do that. Don't look there.

Put the deeds of the body to death. What does it say here? You will live. The life of Jesus will come in.

Second Corinthians 4, verse 10, always carrying the dying of Jesus in us, so that verse 10, the life of Jesus will be manifested. And so, verse 11, God delivers us to death everyday. All the time.

Why? If I give myself over to death, the life of Jesus will come forth. That's why you see in some people. I have seen in very few Christians.

They become so godly. They will never speak angry words. They will never behave in an unchristlike way.

They are not perfect. But you can see more and more the life of Jesus has come. Only through the death of the cross.

Everybody knows that Jesus died for our sins. But that I have to take up the cross everyday, that's not understood by everybody. That is the message that is being destroyed in Christianity.

God has raised us up to proclaim that message again. In Martin Luther's day, it was salvation by faith. But he didn't preach taking up the cross everyday.

Today it's our calling to preach that. Is it in the Bible? All over the New Testament. It was not there in the old testament.

But this is the central message of the new covenant. If you have understood this, you have understood the main message of the new covenant. If not, it's all theory.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that all these things will become practical and real in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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