

The Church – A Place Of Sacrifice And Protection

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of sacrificial living and wholehearted commitment to building God's church. It encourages believers to offer everything to God, seek His approval alone, and be willing to pay any price for serving Him. The message highlights the need for humility, sacrifice, and a willingness to follow God's commands exactly, even when misunderstood or criticized by others.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 28:19, 2 Chronicles 7:16, John 15:16, Matthew 16:18, Luke 9:23, Philipians 2:3, 1 John 2:17

Topics: "Sacrificial Living", "Wholehearted Commitment"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of sacrificial living and wholehearted commitment to building God's church. It encourages believers to offer everything to God, seek His approval alone, and be willing to pay any price for serving Him. The message highlights the need for humility, sacrifice, and a willingness to follow God's commands exactly, even when misunderstood or criticized by others.

Transcript

We thank the Lord for opening the heavens above us and giving us his word so richly through many brothers in these days. We do not take anything for granted. I said on the first day that we were thankful that we had freedom in this country to be able to meet together like this.

We don't know how long that freedom will continue. But in the same way, we don't take for granted that as if we deserve to get a word from heaven. We who deserve nothing, God gives us his word richly.

And personally, I'm excited that God raises up different brothers who are gripped by the same truths that gripped us when we were their age, 36 years ago. And that it's such a joy to see another generation rising up, being able to carry on the same message and we pray that it will continue until Jesus comes in many, many places. We're not called to serve the whole of India.

We're not called to serve the whole world. But there are a few people whom God calls us to shepherd. Jesus said in John 17, Father, I'm not praying for the world.

You know that he said that? I'm not praying for the world. But those whom you gave me, and that was 11. Jesus had a very small church, but it was a pretty powerful church.

So those whom you gave me, the Lord says, thine they were, Father. Everybody in the earth belongs to God. And Father, you gave some of them to me.

And I preserved them. Make them holy, make them one. So I have also felt that way myself.

There are certain people whom God has given me. There's certain people whom God has given to different elders here. Not just to me.

I'm just one of the elders among others. And I say, Lord, those are the only ones I have to take care of. I'm not here to meet all the needs in India.

I have to finish the work God gave me to do. And as churches, God has given us a particular work to do, and we want to complete it. And if God wants us to do a particular work in another place, he will open a door there.

That's how he opened a door in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and different parts of India and different parts of the Gulf and Australia and America and it's quite amazing ways in different parts of Europe. God, wherever God opens a door and gives us a sense that we have something to give them. And I always go to these places believing that they have something to give us.

Because in the body of Christ, there is no part that can say, I'm self-sufficient. I only give, I never receive. There's no part.

You may say the heart is the most important. If I were to ask you, which is more important, the heart or the hand? Definitely the heart. But if the hand doesn't take food and put it into the mouth, the heart will die.

Do you know that? The heart is dependent on the hand. And the hand is dependent on the heart. It's like that with every single member in the body.

There's give and receive. We bless others and they bless us. So that is the type of body we want to build.

Where some may have a more prominent gift than others. That doesn't matter. The heart is definitely more prominent and more important than the hand.

But the heart cannot live without the hand. And however great a gift God may give you, you must recognize that you need the other brothers and sisters. We need them.

I was once in a meeting in a conference in America where there were a number of, it was some other denomination, there were a number of children who had Down's syndrome. Down's syndrome is a form of mental retardation where they never developed normally. They were abnormal from birth.

And you can see it on their faces. It's like little Chinese type of faces children have. It's called Down's syndrome.

And there were a number of children in that conference. And I said, these children, they cannot sin consciously because they don't know what they are doing. They will all be in heaven, without a doubt.

They will be part of the body of Jesus Christ. I don't know about all the others sitting here, I said, but these ones I'll definitely know, I'll see in heaven. If they are part of the body of Christ, then there's some contribution they can make to the body.

Now what contribution can a Down's syndrome child make to the body? I said, have these children blessed you in any way? I said, I've just seen them for one or two days here in the conference and they've already blessed me. And I'll tell you how. I said, as children of Adam, we are all very hard-hearted people.

Adam has given us, all of us, a very hard heart. And particularly when we spend so much time criticizing Babylon, our heart becomes harder still. It's one of the problems of exposing evil in other places.

And, but every time I see one of these children who is mentally retarded or challenged, as they say, and has Down's syndrome, I feel a little tenderness and compassion seeing them. They have made, softened my heart a little without their knowing it. They have blessed me without knowing it.

And I see a number of them, every time I see them, my hard heart gets a little softened. There is nobody who cannot bless us. Even one without opening his mouth can bless us.

If we are humble and are open to receive from all and don't ever feel that we only have to give, we are so prominent. There is nobody like that. The one who exalts himself like that will be humbled and may even drop out of the church altogether.

I've seen some cases like that, even in our churches. Some very gifted brothers who were elders, who began to think no end of themselves because they were so prominent and so gifted. They are not with us today.

They've fallen away. I hope they get to heaven. I don't know whether they will.

But I have fear for such people. Anyone who thinks he is indispensable. The church cannot do without me.

I always tell our elders, God's work went on in this world long before you were born. And God's work will continue in this world long after you are dead and gone. You are here for a short while.

Just be faithful and do your work and don't have high thoughts about yourself. Many years ago, I read a poem, which has blessed me. It's called, Words to anyone who feels that he is indispensable.

Advice to those who feel that others cannot live without me. Church cannot live without me. And the poem said, Anytime you feel that you are very important and indispensable, do this little exercise.

Take a bucket of water and put your fist into that bucket of water and pull it out. And the hole that is remaining there, when you pull out your hand, that is how much you will be missed after you are gone. You try it out.

Try and put your hand in a bucket of water and see what a big hole will be left when you pull out your hand. That is how important you are. And I've never forgotten it.

I say, Lord, that's all. I have to do my work and move on. Nobody is indispensable.

It's a great honor that God gives any of us to even have a small part in doing a work for all eternity. One day, all the great scientists and all the great inventors and great politicians and businessmen and Nobel Prize winners and all these people who got such a lot of fame on this earth will all be dead and gone. And when we stand before the Lord, we will discover that only those who have done the will of God will remain forever.

That's in 1 John 2, verse 17. Those who do the will of God, their work will remain forever. And you will see in that day, all the great Nobel laureates and all the great scientists and people who thought they accomplished something, nobody knows where they are.

Most of them are in hell. So it's good for us to be wise in these days and say, Lord, I want to do a work that will last for eternity. Jesus said to his disciples, I have chosen you, John 15, and ordained you, I think it's verse 16, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.

That's very important. I don't want to produce fruit that will disappear in a few years. There are people who build churches and in a few years it collapses, there's nothing left in it.

But Jesus said, I will build a church against which the gates of hell will never prevail. That's the type of church I want to build. I don't want to waste my labor trying to build something which will collapse in a few years.

I want to build something that will last for eternity. Sure, because I'm an eternal creature. And I want to make sure that what I'm doing is on a good foundation that will last for all eternity and not just disappear in a few years gone like a puff of smoke.

I've seen a lot of that type of thing and a lot of people have done what they call God's work and planted churches and what's left of it. After a few years there's nothing there. And invariably the reason why that work is destroyed is because of the pride of the men who labored there.

God became their enemy. As soon as they became proud, they thought they could do God's work because they were such mighty men of God. And God humbled them and destroyed their work, there's nothing left.

So we must learn from these examples and humble ourselves. And since we were speaking about new wine in new wineskins and thinking about the church, I thought we could look at a couple of verses in the Old Testament where there are pictures of the church. One of the pictures of the church is the tabernacle which Moses built.

And one thing we read about that tabernacle is if you read Exodus chapter 39 and 40, there's just one thing I want to point out to you there, that 18 times it says in those chapters Moses did exactly as the Lord commanded. Now you would have thought if you mention it once, that's enough. But no.

Starting with Exodus 39 verse 1, in the last part it says just as the Lord commanded Moses. It's repeated in verse 5, chapter 39, verse 5 and verse 7 and numerous times. And verse 43, the last verse, Moses examined all the work and it was as the Lord had commanded.

I praise God for those elder brothers who will examine their work and see is it exactly as the Lord commanded. I do that. I examine my life, I examine my work and say, Lord, is this exactly as you commanded in Scripture? Every little thing, not only the big things.

You read Exodus 39 and 40, you people who think that some commands are small, it doesn't matter if we don't obey it. That's the reason why 18 times it says every little thing, every little socket and everything was exactly as the Lord commanded. And finally it says in Exodus 40 that he did everything as the Lord commanded, verse 32, the last part, just as the Lord commanded Moses and verse 33, the last part, thus Moses finished the work.

At the end of my life, I want to be able to look back over my life and say to the best of my knowledge, I did everything exactly as the Lord commanded in my life, in my home and in the church. I didn't use my own brain to think that I could make it better than the way the Lord did it. I didn't think that I was superior to the Apostle Paul and I could do it better than he did it.

I don't want to have a financial policy better than Jesus' financial policy. That's why we never write prayer letters asking for money or sending reports because that is a human method. I don't criticize others.

It's not my business. God is their judge. But I want to do it just as the Lord commanded.

Everything. That's why we don't take an offering. I never see Jesus passing an offering bag when he preached anywhere.

I say, I want to do it just as the Lord commanded. I don't see the Apostles doing it. So I say, we want to do it exactly as the Lord commanded.

You see in Scripture, we want to do it like that. If Scripture churches were planted, elders were appointed, the Apostles did that, we'd do it like that. Exactly.

And thus Moses finished the work. What is the result? Verse 34, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And I want to say, many a time in many a conference, we have concluded the conference and recognized the glory of the Lord has been in our midst.

Jesus has been in our midst. We've got light. We've been blessed.

Heaven has been open over us. And we continue in brokenness and humility to say, Lord, please help us to endure until the end. However much christened they may compromise and say, it doesn't matter, these things are not so important.

Let them say what they like. In the smallest little detail, we want to follow exactly as the Lord commanded. Let people call us fanatics.

Say what they like. I'm not a legalist. A legalist is one who forces other people to do it the way I understand it.

We don't force people because it'll be a dead work. We tell people this is how we do it. In our church, if you're not happy, there are a hundred other churches you can go and join.

We're not stopping any of you. Please go there and do as you like. But in our church, this is the way we do it.

Exactly as the Lord commanded. And you are not going to change that in our church. No, it's like telling a bus driver to change the bus route and go in some direction you want.

No sensible bus driver is going to change that route because some passenger wants to go another direction. He'll say, listen, if you want to go that direction, there's another bus. If you want to go that way, there's another church.

So, when we look at these Old Testament examples, the other great example in the Old Testament is the temple. The temple was another picture of the church. Then also, we see the glory of the Lord came and

filled the temple.

So, the two verses I want to show you there. One is 2 Chronicles 3, verse 1. In 2 Chronicles 3, verse 1, we read that Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Now, God had particularly marked the place where the temple was to be built.

And this has a spiritual meaning for us because this is the place where the church must be built. The New Wineskin, God determines. In those days, it was a physical location.

Today, it's a spiritual location. That means this type of spiritual place is where God builds the church today. Are you keen on building a local church in your area? First of all, learn a lesson from Moses.

Do everything exactly as the Lord commanded and don't go the compromising way of the rest of Christendom. Number one. And the other thing we see here is, he built the house of the Lord in Mount Moriah where the Lord had appeared to his father, David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite.

It was not just in Jerusalem. It was in Mount Moriah. And not just in Mount Moriah.

The address was, the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite, which is in Mount Moriah, which is in Jerusalem. That is the full address. The exact spot.

It has to be this particular place where David had offered an offering in the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. And if you want to see that, you got to turn back to 2 Samuel chapter 24. In 2 Samuel chapter 24, we read of a time when God, David sinned by counting the number of people, teaching us we shouldn't be counting the number of people in our churches, or finding some glory in that anyway.

And the Lord punished them. And then the Lord forgave them. And they repented.

And then the prophet came to David and told him in 2 Samuel 24 verse 18, you got to go and now erect an altar and offer an offering there in this particular place, in the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. It is a place of forgiveness. Where God had forgiven David.

And where he was going to offer a thanksgiving offering for God's forgiveness. So David goes up to the threshing floor of Ornan, who is one of his subjects. And Ornan looked up and saw the king coming, verse 20, 2 Samuel 24, 20.

And he bowed down and said, what do you want, O king? Why have you come here? David said, I want to buy your threshing floor because the Lord has told me to build, verse 21, an altar here so that this plague can be stopped. And Ornan said, oh sure. Please take it.

You don't have to pay for it. You're my king. Please take the ground.

I'll give it to you. I'll give you the oxen also free. I'll give you the yokes of the oxen to wooden yokes to burn the fire.

It's my privilege to give it to you free. Everything, O king, verse 23, I, Arauna, give you. May the Lord your God accept you.

But the king said, I will not accept it free. I will pay a price for it. The church is built in the place where people are willing to pay a price.

Not those who want to get it cheap. Free. Without any sacrifice.

And then he says these wonderful words. I will never offer to God that which costs me nothing. I was a young man of about 22 or 21 when God gave me that verse.

I was in the Navy. I will never offer to the Lord, my God, that which costs me nothing. The Lord said to me, you must never offer to me anything in your life which costs you nothing.

Many people who argue about tithe and all that, very often it costs them nothing. Their glory and what they've given. The question is not what you've given.

The question is how much did it cost you? Did it cost you something? I will not offer to the Lord, my God, that which costs me nothing in any area. I will sacrifice. It has to cost me time, energy, convenience, comfort, reputation, anything.

Health. I'm willing to give it for the Lord's sake. If the Lord can find people like that who will say, I will not offer to my God an offering that has cost me zero.

That is the place, the threshing floor of Aravana, the Jebusite, the Lord said, this is the place where the church is going to be built. The Lord told Solomon, this is the place. And it's also we read in 2 Chronicles 3 that that was in Mount Moriah.

Mount Moriah, you go back to Genesis chapter 22, is the place where God told Abraham to offer up his son. It was three days journey from where Abraham was living. And you read that Abraham went three days to serve this God who appeared to be so demanding that he, to kill his only son, he went.

And I think all those three days, why did God allow Abraham to, why didn't He just tell him, take him around the corner and kill him? You know, God never wants us to take a decision quickly in an emotion. That's why I don't have the practice that some people have of asking people, come on, have you decided to come forward and take a decision right now? There's nothing wrong in that. There are many great evangelists who say, come forward.

Stand up and come forward. You know what I say? I say sit down and count the cost. And see whether you want to follow and go and tell the Lord privately after two, three days.

Right now, you're in the emotion of a moment. You know, even at the end of a conference, you can be so emotional, you're willing to take any decision you like. I remember one of the last days of one of the conferences, we found a golden earring in the offering box.

And that which would excite most pastors did not excite me at all. I said, I don't know, some sister got all emotional and took out the earring and put it in the offering box. So in the next session, we made an announcement.

Some sister has put the golden earring into an offering box. Will you please come and see me after this session, with your father, if you're not married, or with your husband, if you're married. So this lady came with her husband and said, yes, I put that.

I wanted to give it an offering to God. I said, that's very good of you, sister. Please listen to me.

I'm a servant of the Lord. Please take this offering. God has accepted your offering.

Here, take this earring. First of all, did you ask your husband? He said, yes. The husband was there.

Now take this earring, go home, think about it for 2-3 weeks. By the time your emotions will subside, you'll come down to normal. And then decide whether you want to give your earring.

And if you still want to give, I mean, God will accept your offering. Then you please convert into cash and send a check to CFC. We never heard from her again.

Praise the Lord. Otherwise, 3 weeks later, she'll say, boy, I made such a foolish decision in my emotion and those fellows just grabbed it and went off. No.

We'll never do that. So, God said to Abraham, walk 3 days and think about it. Is it worth serving such a God who asked me to kill my only son? And that's what Abraham is thinking about.

Is it worth serving such a God who wants me to kill my only son? Abraham says, yes. At the end of the second day, yes. It's painful, but it's yes.

Third day, yes. He comes to Mount Moriah and he goes up to the top of the mountain and he tells his servants, I don't want you to see my secret sacrifices before God. He didn't even tell them what he's going to do.

He went up to the top and he kept Isaac on the altar and said, God, I will not offer to you that which costs me nothing. That's what he was saying in his spirit. I'm not going to offer 5000 sheep here.

That would cost me nothing. I'm ready to lay down my life. That would cost me nothing but to kill my son.

My beloved son. That costs me everything. I will not offer to you that which costs me nothing.

You asked for my son. Here it is. God said, I don't want your son.

Take him back. I was only testing your devotion. God is a good God.

He's a loving Father. God. You know that is the place where Jesus was crucified? Outside Jerusalem.

And as Abraham offered up his son he got a revelation from God. It's not mentioned there that he got that revelation. But he got a revelation supernaturally that one day God would offer his son like Abraham did in that same city of Jerusalem.

That's what Jesus said in John chapter 8 verse 56. Your father, Abraham he told the Pharisees rejoiced to see my day. And he saw it.

And he was glad. You know when he saw it? When did he see the day when God would offer his son? Send his son to the earth? When he offered up his son. I'll tell you something.

When you decide in your life like Abraham to offer to God that which costs you everything, you will get revelations on Jesus Christ which you never see otherwise. You will see like Abraham, Jesus in a new way. I have seen it.

I have got the most amazing revelations of Christ from the scriptures and truths of the new covenant that I have never read anywhere. There are a lot of truths I have heard from others. I acknowledge.

I did not discover justification by faith and forgiveness of sins directly. I heard it from others. Many truths I have heard from others about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and Christ coming in the flesh.

But there are many other truths concerning the new covenant and the new covenant church which I discovered in scripture. Amazing revelations. And you can have them.

Abraham got a revelation because he decided I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing. And that was David's attitude throughout his life. I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing.

And do you know that is why God gave the pattern of the temple to David? He gave the pattern of the tabernacle to Moses and Moses built the tabernacle. Solomon was the wisest human being up to that time on earth. But God did not give the pattern of the temple to Solomon.

Do you know that? Solomon built it. He was like the mason in one sense. The architect was David.

I don't know whether you know that. See in 1 Chronicles and David says in chapter 29 1 Chronicles you know in chapter 28 he gathered all the officials of the temple and he begins to tell them in verse 11. Then David gave to his son Solomon 1 Chronicles 28.11 gave to his son Solomon the plan for the porch, temple, building, storehouses, upper rooms, inner rooms, mercy seat.

The plan he had in mind for the courts and also for how to divide the priests verse 13 and the Levites for all the work of the service and verse 14 for the golden utensils and the weight of gold and the silver utensils. Imagine teaching the wisest man on earth what type of spoons and knives and all you need. Can you imagine? The wisest man on the earth who is coming up but God can't give the plan to him because Solomon's wisdom was in his head.

David was a man after God's own heart. God looks at the heart. You can be a very clever person like Solomon and God will not reveal the plan of the church to you.

You got to go to the man after God's own heart who may not be half as clever as you are in your brain. That fellow will show you the plan. That's what we learned from there.

The man after God's own heart got the plan because the plan of the church you get in your heart even the plan for a physical temple was not given to the wisest man. Even for the spoons and bowls, the man after God's own heart has to tell him and David says in verse 19, all this the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me. He says one day when I was in prayer God put his hand upon me and said David, write and I wrote.

The pillars, the size of the temple, the rooms, the divisions of the priests, Levites, what all utensils, the weight of gold for the lamb stands, every little thing for the tables of showbread and the silver for the silver tables, the forks, verse 17. Imagine teaching a wise man how to construct a fork and that really challenges me. It teaches me that all the cleverness in the world, there are a lot of clever people who try to build a church and they make a mess of it.

There are clever people who go to the scriptures and read and get bright ideas from scripture. They don't realize that's not revelation, it's just a bright idea. So that's the first thing we need to see.

God looks for the man who will say Lord I will never offer to you that which costs me nothing and I want to ask you that first of all, those of you who are eager to be a part of a functioning body of Christ in your locality. Any brother, any sister, young, you may not be the elder, never in your life may be the elder, but you can be an effective member of the body of Christ. If you say Lord, from this day I want to be a person of sacrifice, of self-denial.

I'm willing to sacrifice my convenience to serve you. I will not think of myself. I tell you that is how Ian and I have served.

You probably do not know how many hours a brother like Ian has had to deny his family, his presence in order to serve other people. I always say Ian Robson is the man who never says no to anybody. That involves a lot of sacrifice.

I decided the same that I will never if I have to serve people and serve the church, I will not say no. If I go to a place and they ask me to speak 12 times in 3 days, I'll speak 12 times in 3 days. I don't have it within me.

But I always say Lord, the river of God is full of water. There's no shortage there. Just keep the channel clean so that it flows through without any problem.

That's all my duty. My duty is years ago I said Lord, I'm not in the production business. I'm in the distribution business.

You give me the loaves I'll pass it on. I can't produce the loaves and the fish but I'm ready to pass it on and I will not seek my own convenience if somebody comes to my house and needs counseling and it's lunch time, I'm willing to forget about my lunch and sit with him as long as he wants. Many of these different places I've been to after a full day's meeting, I sit with the young people till 2 o'clock at night talking, answering questions many places, India, other places.

Lord, I will not seek my own convenience. I will not seek my own sleep. God will give me enough sleep to keep me fresh.

That's his business. He can keep me fresh with three hours of sleep. Can't God do that? I'm not a worldly person depending on human resources alone and I've found that God has never failed me in all these 45 years.

I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing. When I think of cost I say what I call sacrifice is nothing. If I think I've sacrificed something for the Lord, I'm fooling myself.

Do any of you think you've sacrificed something for the Lord? You're in darkness! Yes, we make a few little sacrifices but it's like the stars. Teeny weeny lights compared to the sacrifice of Jesus which is like the bright light of the sun. Why is it you see those teeny weeny lights of your sacrifices? Because you're in the darkness.

You can see the stars only in the darkness. How is it when the sun rises you can't see those stars? Do you see your sacrifices? Then you're not in the sunlight. You're in the darkness.

When you see the sun, the brightness of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary, it is impossible to see the stars of your little teeny weeny sacrifices. But we must have an attitude. Lord, I will never offer to you that which

cost me nothing.

I will not seek my own convenience. I will not seek anything. I will not seek my own comfort.

I'm ready to sleep on the floor. Even today, I'm willing to eat any type of food, go any type of place, travel by bullock cart or airplane. It's all the same to me.

If that is God's will, He'll take me from one place to another. And if I have a backache, I'll just do a few exercises to strengthen my back and carry on serving the Lord. I'm not going to make silly excuses saying I can't serve the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope you will be like that till the end of your life. Better than me. Because my Savior came to earth like that.

He came saying, I will not offer to my Father that which cost me nothing. That's how He laid the foundation for the church. And those are the type of bricks He wants in the church.

People who have that spirit. I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing. The second verse I want to show you is in 2 Chronicles again.

After the what we saw is the beginning of the temple, now we see the completion of the temple. In 2 Chronicles chapter 7 when Solomon finished the house, verse 11, 2 Chronicles 7.11 and successfully completed all that he planned. Then the Lord appeared to Solomon and said to him.

You know, earlier on they had sacrificed and we read in verse 2 of chapter 7, just like in the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord filled the house. And if your eyes have been open here in the conference, I believe you would have seen the glory of the Lord fill this hall as well in these days. And that day the Lord appeared to Solomon after this was all over and said to him, I have chosen, verse 12, I have chosen this place to be a house of sacrifice.

That's what the church is. And if you see a man or a woman whom God has used, it's because she has sacrificed. He has sacrificed.

He has not sought his own convenience. I have chosen this place to be a house of sacrifice. And if one day some of you sin and I shut up the heavens, the blessing of the Lord is not there, and you have a dry meeting, there's no Holy Spirit, there's no rain, or the fruit is all eaten up, if in such a situation my people will humble themselves and pray and say, Lord, the glory is gone, something has happened, and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear again from heaven and I will heal their land.

And listen to this. Apply it to the church. My eyes will be open, my ears attentive to the prayer made in this place.

In the place of sacrifice, when people pray, God hears. His eyes are open. And we live before His face.

We do not seek to please men. We do not care what men say about us. Because we come to the place where God's eyes are open and sees into the depths of our heart.

This is how we must live in the church every day. Lord, you see things which other people may not see. I want to live before your face because your eyes are open in this place.

There are areas of my life other people know nothing about. In fact, all of you know less than 10% of my life. What do you know about my thoughts? What do you know about my motives? Pretty much nothing.

And I don't know much about your motives either. But we live before God's face, His eyes are open and we live before Him. It could mean little, little things, you know, where we could be misunderstood by others.

But if something is what we feel is the best for God, are you willing to do it, even if you're misunderstood by others? I'll tell you I had a struggle a couple of years ago, which was the first time I asked two of my sons to speak in a conference, Santosh and Sandeep, and I was thinking, what will other people think? That I'm trying to promote my sons? I even asked Sanjay to speak. And I said, I have to live before God's face. I do not know any man according to the flesh.

If something is good for God's people, I don't care who it is. And I got a comfort from the fact that Jesus chose His mother's sisters, two children, James and John, His own first cousins, to be His disciples. And not only to be His disciples, but to be inner circle of three.

And people could have looked at Jesus and said, look at this guy. And His own brothers don't believe in Him, so otherwise He would have chosen them. But He's chosen His first cousins.

This is a family business. And just for the sake so that people don't misunderstand He's put Peter also in that group so that it doesn't look as if it's only His two cousins. Jesus was not bothered one bit.

I said, Lord, I want to walk in Your footsteps. I don't care. I'm not bothered.

If that was God's will, Jesus would choose James and John, His own first cousins, to be in His inner circle. What a wonderful thing it is to be free from the opinions of men. And that liberated me.

I said, Lord, I'm going to live before Your face. Let every critic misunderstand and criticize. It doesn't bother me one bit.

I see Your example. I see Jesus in everything in my life. As I've tried to look at Jesus' example, I found an answer.

To every problem, I found a solution looking at Jesus. There's something He has done. He was tempted like me.

And there was a solution in Him. His eyes are open in this place. And we live before His face.

I want to encourage all of you, you want to build a church, live before the eyes of God. Not trying to impress people with your spirituality or trying to do things like this, like that, so that you won't be misunderstood. You will mess up God's work.

Live before God's face. Seek His approval alone. And if people misunderstand, let them misunderstand.

If people judge, let them judge. God will bear witness to what you do and shut their mouths. He will do it.

He'll take care of shutting their mouths. You don't have to justify yourself. You don't have to do anything.

God will bear witness if you do something before His face. And it's a wonderful thing to experience God bearing witness. And then the Lord says, Now I have chosen, consecrated this house, 2 Chronicles 7-16,

that my name will be there forever.

That's what we seek in the church. That the name of Jesus will be exalted. Not any human being's name.

And my eyes and my heart will be there perpetually. He's going to watch over the church. He's going to watch over us and our homes.

It's a promise of protection. My eyes and my heart will be there. Not only that you live before my eyes, but my eyes will watch out for you that protect you from harm.

Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The church is going to stand triumphant when Satan attacks it. And the church will go and attack Satan's kingdom and Satan will not succeed.

We are triumphant because God's eyes are always watching over us, protecting us. You remember how Jesus, God watched over Jesus when he was a little baby? When he was a helpless baby and headed soldiers could not kill him. Because by the time the soldiers came, the baby had gone.

God will care for us like that. I remember some years ago, some folks in Bangalore know about it, when people brought the police to my house. People who had something against me.

But they couldn't do me because God took me away before they came. I wasn't there. And he reminded me of how he took Jesus away before headed soldiers came.

He is the same today. He will care for you as he cared for Jesus. I have experienced that numerous times.

My eyes are there watching over you to protect you from your enemies and from those who will seek you to do you harm. If you will commit yourself to build my church, no man will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. Dear brothers and sisters, that's for you.

The church is a place of tremendous protection. I thank God that my four boys grew up in the church. I wouldn't let them grow up anywhere else.

God's eyes were there. What a blessed protection from all the evil of the world and the devil. That's why it's so important for you to be wholehearted that in your place you can also build a church which will protect the families whose children are going astray.

Is it because of your failure that there is no church in your place? Or your church that you're planting is an absolute mess? Because you're not willing to sacrifice. You're seeking your own. You're not willing to pay the price.

You're so calculating in the way you give to God like a miser. Calculating, oh, I've done enough for the Lord. I can't go.

I can't do this. It's raining. Oh, it's inconvenient.

It's too far. You keep saying like that, brother, forget about serving the Lord. Go and do something else.

Go and do business. Or go and work in some other job. Don't try to serve the Lord.

Don't try to build a church if you're always looking for making excuses. Say, Lord, you can call me anytime, day or night. I'm available.

We read in one place that Jesus walked about 60-70 kilometers all the way walked with his disciples to bless one non-Israelite woman from Syrophenicia whose daughter was demon-possessed. That's the one to whom he said the dogs can eat the crumbs from the table. Give me a crumb.

He walked 70 kilometers just to heal that one person and the next morning he walked 70 kilometers back. Walking 140 kilometers to bless one person. I said, Lord Jesus, please make me like you.

I want to walk in your footsteps. Not just a biased little song to sing follow, follow, I will follow Jesus anywhere, everywhere. Are you willing to walk 140 kilometers? Walk! 140 kilometers to help one person.

I will not offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing. I remember about I think it was about 30 years, 24 years ago or something, a brother from Australia said, we are three of us here, brother, will you come to have some meetings for us? Travel all the way from India to Australia to meet three people? I said, yeah. I'll come.

There are other places where 10,000 people gather together and the Lord says, don't go. I won't go. Dear brothers and sisters, it's a wonderful thing to serve the Lord.

It's a wonderful thing to offer everything to Him and say, Lord, I have only one earthly life. Please use it to build a church that will last for eternity. I'm willing to pay any price.

Send me the bill. I'll pay whatever it is. Can you say that? Send me the bill.

I'll pay it. Whatever the cost. I tell you, God will do miracles through you.

And He will protect you. His eyes will be over you. He'll protect your family from the snares of Satan and your children will grow up to serve the Lord.

What a wonderful heritage we can have. And when God does that, we need to fall on our face before God and say, Lord, we are unworthy slaves. We have only done what You told us to do.

We can take no credit for anything. When we look at Calvary's cross, I meditate on it frequently. I've been doing that for 50 years and the Lord shows me deeper meanings in that cross.

And I say, Lord, I don't think in my whole life I could ever, ever repay even a fraction of what You went through on that cross for me. I never want to forget it. I feel it was my sin that weighed You down there.

And You've forgiven me. I want to give all to You. I hope you will all make that decision and say, Lord, I want the new wine.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit in my life. I want to open my whole being. I've laid the sacrifice on the altar.

I've laid everything. I've given the very best. There's no reason why the fire should not fall upon my life.

He'll do it. Lord, I open myself to You. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and use even me to do a small part in building Your church on earth before You come.

It doesn't matter who You are. You've heard some brothers get up here and speak who can't speak one word of English. But God's anointed them to build a church.

And a better church than a lot of educated people are building in many places. It's not education. Are you willing to offer to the Lord that which costs you everything? Let's pray.

Let's bow before God. I'm not going to ask you to come forward. I'm going to ask you to sit down and count the cost.

I'm not going to ask you to make any emotional decision. Take three days to think about it like Abraham did. And see whether you're willing.

And finally, when you decide, say, Lord, I'll do whatever You want me to do. I want to live utterly for You. And trust Him.

Don't live in fear that the devil will mess up your life or harm you. He cannot. God's eyes are on you.

His ears are open to your prayer. Say, Lord, help me to find my place in the church in these last days. Help me to find my place in the living church of God that You're building in these last days.

I want to be a part of it. I want to submit to authority. I don't want to be a law unto myself.

Help me, Lord, to find my place in the church. Father, we thank You for all that You've done. We give You glory.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/ASvPTG9okvM.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-church-a-place-of-sacrifice-and-protection/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

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

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

www.sermonindex.net