

# The Kingdom Of Heaven And Not of Earth

by Zac Poonen

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**Scripture:** Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17, Philippians 4:19, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Samuel 2:30, Colossians 3:1, Galatians 6:14

**Topics:** "Kingdom Focus", "Trusting God's Provision"

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## Description

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## Transcript

You know, when Jesus came to earth, before Jesus came, God sent someone to prepare the way for Jesus. You know who that is, John the Baptist. He was called a forerunner for Jesus Christ.

And the message that John the Baptist brought was to prepare the nation of Israel, if they accepted it, to receive Christ. But they did not accept it, so they rejected Christ. But today, we have to see that that is the message we need to hear, John the Baptist's message, to prepare the way for Christ to come into our heart.

The Israelites rejected that message, so they missed out on what Christ could do for them. And if we miss out on the message, we will not experience in fullness what Christ can do for us. So the message of John the Baptist was, Matthew 3 verse 2, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

That means turn around, don't be occupied with the kingdom of earth, and be occupied with the kingdom of heaven. Why was that necessary? Because for 1,500 years, from the time of Moses till the time of Jesus, they had always been occupied, the whole nation of Israel, with earthly blessing. You read from the time of Abraham, Genesis 12, which is when Israel started as a nation, right up to Malachi, you'll never find a single promise of spiritual blessing, or heavenly riches, or freedom from sin.

No, not a single promise. Every promise was, I will bless you with a wonderful land, property, I'll bless you with a lot of money. Money means your bonds will prosper.

It's like telling a businessman today, your business will prosper. Or somebody working in an office, you'll succeed in your office, you'll keep getting promotions. Equivalent of that is your bonds will prosper.

If you have cattle, your cattle multiply, and you'll become an extremely wealthy person. And I'm the Lord your healer, I will heal you of your sicknesses. That was the kingdom of earth, a land of Canaan, plenty of money, physical health, many children to carry on your name.

Every promise was earthly. You read it in Deuteronomy 28, when you get time. And if they disobeyed, the punishment was also earthly.

God never said to them, you'll go to hell. There was no heaven or hell preaching in the Old Testament. It was all, you'll get sick, you'll become blind, you'll become mad.

That's Deuteronomy 28. If you obey, you'll get all the earthly blessings. If you disobey, you'll get all these earthly curses.

So their whole mind was occupied with the things of earth and the kingdom of earth. And then comes John the Baptist and says, repent. Now today, when you tell a person to repent, you're telling him to give up his drinking and his gambling and his smoking and adultery and a lot of things like that.

But when John the Baptist said, repent, he was saying, turn around. Turn around from what? From the kingdom of earth, because the kingdom of heaven is near. And when John the Baptist was taken into prison, Matthew 4, verse 12, Jesus heard that.

And then Jesus began to preach, Matthew 4, 17, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He preached the same message. So it's like a relay race that John the Baptist ran his race and preaching, turn around from kingdom of earth, think of the kingdom of heaven is coming.

Then his course was over, he handed it over to Jesus and Jesus said, turn around for the kingdom of heaven is coming. And then on the day of Pentecost, the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God came. That's when it actually came.

He's not talking about the future time when the whole earth will be covered with the glory of the Lord. No. The kingdom of heaven came to earth on the day of Pentecost when the new covenant was established.

You see that, for example, here in Mark's gospel. In the gospel of Mark, we read Jesus saying in Mark chapter 9 and verse 1, he was saying to them, there are some of you standing here who will not taste death, until they see the kingdom of God come with power. That means there was a lot of people standing there and he said, some of you will die, but there are a number of people here who will not die till you see the kingdom of God come.

When was that? Nobody there is living today. So what did he mean? The kingdom of God come with power. And that word power reminds us of Acts 1 verse 8, where Jesus said the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you'll receive power.

So from these verses, we recognize that what Jesus was referring to was the day of Pentecost when the kingdom of God came with power. So the church, which was formed with 120 people being baptized in the

Holy Spirit, was supposed to be a miniature sample of the kingdom of God. So you know, if you're a church here or anywhere in the world, you are supposed to show to people around, not just that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, but to be a demonstration of what the kingdom of God is like.

Not the kingdom occupied with earthly things. And this is where we have to say Christianity has failed the Lord completely. Because most preachers today in the world, particularly Pentecostals and Charismatics, it started in America and it's gone all over the world, it's covered India, everywhere, is the kingdom of earthly blessing.

The kingdom of earthly blessing. We have gone back to Deuteronomy 28. How clever the devil is.

The Holy Spirit came and took them out of Deuteronomy 28 and Acts chapter 2 and said, this is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. You're going to be occupied with the kingdom of God. And after 2000 years, the Holy Spirit, the devil has brought them right back to Deuteronomy 28 and says, if you follow the Lord, he'll bless you.

With what? Not with a life of victory over your anger and bitterness and jealousy and complaining. No, no, no, no. He'll bless you with money and he'll bless you with help.

Well, that's exactly what Moses told the Israelites. Moses told the Israelites, God won't give you victory over anger and jealousy and sexual lust that you'll be defeated by, but he'll give you money. He'll give you health.

That's exactly what the Charismatics are preaching. It's not just the Charismatics. Many believers in many churches may not preach that or hear it, but their heart is occupied more with earthly blessing than with the kingdom of God.

And they can sing the songs, you know, this world is not my home. I'm just a passing through. My treasures are all laid up beyond the Bethlehem song.

Their treasures are right here. We sing so many songs, which we don't really mean. And that is why I find that many, many Christians, their Christian life is not satisfying, because they have not listened to the message of John the Baptist.

Just like the Israelites rejected the message of John the Baptist and said, we don't want this kingdom of God at all. We're quite happy with this kingdom of earth. With a little bit of God's blessing that he answers our prayer and does a few earthly things for us, we're quite happy.

And I would say the vast majority of Christians that I have met are occupied with that. And the devil's quite happy, because there is no witness for God about the kingdom of God on earth. And so when God cannot find a witness in a church, he wants it, every church to be like that.

Then he has to find a witness in individuals, here and there, one here, one there, maybe one home, or one brother, one sister, who becomes a witness to the kingdom of God, who manifests by his or her life. Really, he doesn't sing it, but he means it. This world is not my home.

I don't seek for the honor of men. I don't seek to please any human being on this earth. And I'm not interested in money or honor, or I'm not particularly bothered if I'm a little sick, because that's not the main thing for me.

So you have to see that this is the state of Christendom in the world today. Just like Israel rejected the message of John the Baptist, let me repeat that. 1,500 years, let me expand John the Baptist message.

My fellow Israelites, 1,500 years, our leader Moses was giving us the promise of earthly blessing and prosperity and barns overflowing and fields producing a lot of crops and cattle abounding and God's healing power in our families. Now I'm telling you, turn around. Because the kingdom of heaven is near.

The Lamb of God has come to take away the sin of the world, and he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire and lead you into the kingdom of God. Do you know the first person who preached baptism in the Holy Spirit was John the Baptist? The first promise in the New Testament, first promise is Matthew 1 verse 21. He will deliver his people from their sins.

That's a New Testament promise, because it is never found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was, he will forgive your sin. But as soon as you open the first page of the New Testament, the first message is, you shall call his name Jesus, because he will deliver his people from their sins.

There's a lot of difference between being forgiven of our sin and being saved from our sin. A lot of difference. So that is the New Covenant message.

First promise in the New Testament. The second promise in the New Testament is Matthew 3 verse 11. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.

Both are what Jesus will do. Never forget this. The first two promises in the first two pages of the New Testament is, Jesus will save you from your sin and Jesus will fill you with the Holy Spirit.

So if you don't experience those two things, Jesus saving you from the power of sin in your life and Jesus filling you with the Holy Spirit, you have to say that you haven't really entered in the New Covenant. You may be a good Old Covenant believer like the Israelites. Don't you think there were some very good people in the Old Testament? What about Elijah? What a wonderful man he was.

He was Old Covenant. John the Baptist himself was Old Covenant. He said, I'm only a friend of the bridegroom.

Do you know he said that? The greatest prophet in the Old Testament was John the Baptist. And yet, he, see these words of his in John's Gospel. In John's Gospel it says here, verse John 3, 29, when he tells the people, didn't I tell you, verse 28, I'm not the Christ? John 3, 28, I've been sent before him.

He who has the bride, who is the bride? The church is the bridegroom. But me, I'm only a friend of the bridegroom. I stand and I hear his voice and I rejoice to hear the bridegroom's voice.

You know it's like in a wedding. There are many friends of the bridegroom there, but there's one bride. And John the Baptist said, I'm only a friend of the bridegroom.

I'm just attending the wedding. The greatest prophet in the Old Testament, because he lived under the Old Covenant, was only a friend of the bridegroom. Today we say, it's easy to say it, we are the bride of Christ.

But then we have to receive that message which John the Baptist preached to prepare people for receiving Christ, which is turn around from the kingdom of earth, be occupied with the kingdom of heaven. I believe that is the mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Someone who's really entered the new covenant.

You know Paul said in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 14, Paul really was a living testimony to the kingdom of God. Not all the Christians, I think the first Christians were on the day of Pentecost, but Christianity backslid so quickly. Maybe I should show you that first.

If you turn back to Acts chapter 2, there was tremendous a witness before others. Acts chapter 2, Acts chapter 3, Acts chapter 4, where they shared all they had with one another. Acts chapter 5, you know the first sin that was punished in the early church, Acts chapter 5, you know what it was? When a man and his wife loved money.

That's the first sin that is punished in the early church, when they hypocritically pretended that they were giving everything. Now they may have given 50 percent. Supposing they sold their house for 1 million dirhams, or 1 million rupees, and gave half a million rupees for the Lord.

Wow! Have you heard anybody who sold their house for 1 million rupees and gave half a million rupees to the church? You'd call such a person a wholehearted believer. But this guy was killed for giving that. Not because he gave a million.

Peter said, before you gave, sold the house, the house was yours, you didn't have to sell it. After you sold it, the money was still yours, who asked you to give it? But why are you pretending? Why are you pretending here to give everything when you haven't given everything? Supposing, you know, supposing Ann and I had come and said, hey Peter, my wife and I said we can't give everything like all these others. Good, let them give, but we feel we should give only 50 percent.

So we sold our house for 1 million, I'll tell you honestly, we're giving half a million here. Peter said, fine, God bless you. But because he kept quiet, he came and acted as if he's giving everything and walked away.

Peter said, hey, come back here. Boy, those early apostles had discernment. They knew who was a crook, because by looking at their face they could make out who was a crook.

We need that type of discernment today in the church as well, I tell you. You should be able to look at a person who comes to the church and see from his face whether he's a crook or not. Both he and his wife died because they were occupied with the and here Jesus was building the kingdom of heaven.

That's what happened. And when that judgment came, it says here, verse 11, Acts 5 11, great fear came on the whole church and on all who heard these things. In verse 13, this is an amazing verse, none of the people dared to associate with this church, but the people regarded them highly.

You know, when people are scared to join a church saying these guys are too holy, that's a good testimony. That's what I always wanted for CFC, that people should say we can't join that church. I've had people come up to me and say, Brother Zac, I can't be a part of your church, your standards are too high.

I say, God bless you, there are many other churches here, you can go and join them. But when people who are hypocrites feel comfortable to come and join our church, when people whose lives are not straight feel happy to come and join our church, something is wrong. Something is wrong with such a church.

And here it was not like that. It says people were scared to join them, Acts 5 13, and they esteemed them. They said, wow, we can't join this church.

It's good to ask ourselves whether we have such a testimony. I'm not impressed when a whole lot of people come and join, people who just come to listen to the music. I prayed many times in our church, Lord, we don't want a single person to appreciate our music.

Most churches today, they draw people with music. And we deliberately said, we're not interested in drawing, we want to sing well to the glory of God. We don't want to go away from a time of singing and saying, we had a good time.

What do you mean we had a good time? Is this some rock concert or something? Did God have a good time? That's the important thing. Did he get some worship or we had a good time today? I don't want anyone to go away from our church saying we had a good time. The singing was good.

Who says that? We are God. I've told people in our church that in CFC Bangalore that it's not how you sing on Sunday morning or here on Friday that God listens to. God is watching how you lived the previous six days in your home, in your office, when people are angry on the roads, how you behave there.

That determines whether he accepts your singing in the church service on Friday morning here or evening. Not how well you sing. God doesn't bother about whether the music is good.

I don't think you'll ever hear another preacher say that, but I believe it with all my heart. God does not bother whether the music is good or the instruments didn't make any mistake. I couldn't care less if the instruments make mistake.

Sometimes I wish the instruments would make a mistake so that some people would be driven away who come there only to listen to the music. We are not building a church like a rock music hall where we have good music. We must do the best we can, but all of God's people are not great musicians.

The best musicians are out in the world. So I say, people want good music, go to these rock concerts. Don't come here.

Here we preach Jesus who will save his people from their sin and Jesus who will fill people with the Holy Spirit. We want a church where people want to be saved from their sin and filled with the Holy Spirit, not who come to listen to good music, not even people who come to hear good sermons, but who want to come to be convicted of their sin and to be saved from it. And it says here, this is how the church was, but what I wanted to show you was how quickly it backslid.

This is Acts 5. Turn to Acts 6, next chapter. And you see the backsliding has begun. And now the time while the disciples are increasing in number, this is always what happens when the numbers increase, a complaint arose.

You notice the number of people starting attending the meetings increased, then complaints started. One person complaining against the other saying, those widows are getting more food than we. When the food is being served for the widows, in the church those days, they cared for the poor widows and served food for them.

These Jewish believers who were serving poured more soup and food for their own relatives. And those Greek Jews, there were some people converted to Judaism who were Greeks, they'd give a little less to them. And those guys said, hey, why so little for us, just because we are Greeks? You know, this looking down on people of another social level, you think it's not there in the church? It's very much there, even

among some CFC people who think certain people are a little low class.

They are low caste. They're not exactly the same as us. You know, we are sort of upper caste.

I've seen this in CFC at conference time. We have some wonderful poor brothers from Tamil Nadu who can't speak English properly, but who come because they are eager to hear the word of God. They're not very cultured.

They're very poor. They are farmers and people who work in mills. But they love Jesus.

They come for our conferences in the midst of others, highly educated PhD people. And then I see these, there are some wonderful brothers in our church who will mix with everybody equally. Social level makes no difference.

Education makes no difference. But I've also seen some people and their children, they'll only mingle with the more educated, those who can speak English well. It's there.

Same problem was there even today. And you can see that. I don't say anything.

I say that's up to them. I don't force anybody to have fellowship with anybody. But I've seen what happens to those families over a period of 10-15 years, and what happens to their children.

Their children grow up with an arrogant spirit, and they never become spiritual. I would have been ashamed if my children behaved like that. Making a distinction.

You see how backsliding came so quickly in that church. They were occupied with earthly things. What caste are you? What level are you? What is your education level? And I couldn't care less what the education level is.

That's what was happening here. And then they had to try and sort out that problem. And the backsliding that started in Acts chapter 6 has continued for 2,000 years.

There are all types of backsliding today. But God wants us to come back to be occupied with the kingdom of God. Let me show you this in Romans chapter 14 and verse 17, what the kingdom of God is.

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, Romans 14 verse 17. Or we can say the kingdom of God is not anything earthly. It's not eating and drinking, which are the most common things we do.

But it's not property. It's not money. It's not education.

It's not your salary. It's not the type of job you have. None of these things.

The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. In the old covenant, they didn't have righteousness in the Holy Spirit. It was a human righteousness that came through personal struggle and effort.

And they lived pretty good lives. But no Old Testament person had victory in his thought life. Even John the Baptist, he couldn't overcome dirty thoughts or Elijah or Elisha.

They were very good outwardly. But they didn't have an inner life. It's just not possible.

It was a righteousness. It was an external righteousness. Jesus said that to the Pharisees, you clean the outside of the cup, the inside is filthy.

That was because they didn't have the Holy Spirit. And anyone who does not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit, his mind will still be dirty even today. He'll be just like an Old Testament person.

He'll have wrong attitudes today. In fact, that is one of the best ways to find out whether you're filled with the Holy Spirit or not. You may be born again, but you're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

The proof of that is your inside is still dirty, even though the outside looks very clean. That's a mark of an Old Testament believer. Because they don't seek the kingdom of God, they're occupied with earthly things.

So what should our testimony be at the end of our life? People may say, well, if I'm occupied with the kingdom of God, how about my earthly things? Turn to Colossians. I was trying to show you this verse in Colossians in chapter 3, verse 1 and 2 and 3. If you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and set your mind on the things above and not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

So the picture here is, think of a person, think of some believer whom you know, a good believer who's died, he's gone to heaven. I'm sure all of us know some believers who are in heaven now. So think of some of them.

What do you think they're occupied with in heaven? Are they worried about their bank accounts and their property and their health and all that? No, not at all. And it says, the wonderful message of the gospel is, before you die physically, you can die with Christ in your spirit and live with your spirit in heaven while your body is on earth. That is the meaning of, I am crucified with Christ.

The message that is almost not preached in most churches. I'm crucified with Christ, and it's no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. So, Christ lives in me, it's no longer I. You see, no longer I means, I was always occupied with earthly things, but Christ now lives in me.

Christ lived on earth. He did an earthly job for 30 years as a carpenter, and I'm sure he had to concentrate on his work. He wasn't thinking of what sermon to preach when he was making a table.

He was making sure the table is perfect, that it doesn't rock on its legs. So he did a very good job of everything earthly, and he had four brothers and two sisters and a widowed mother to take care of. So he took care of them, provided for them, worked hard as a carpenter and earned money, just like we all earn money to support our family.

That's perfectly okay. But Jesus was not occupied with, I must become the best carpenter in Nazareth, or I must become the richest carpenter in Nazareth. Those things he was not bothered about.

I want to earn my living and take care of my family. But I want to honor God in everything I do. I mean, I'm not going to cheat and make a little more money as a carpenter by cheating somebody.

No. For example, if the wood is not good, he'll change it. He may lose something.

You see, I'm going to do a proper job when I give a job, make a table or a chair for someone. It's going to be a good one. I'm not going to cheat like the other carpenters who do it to make money.

His whole way of working was very different. His aim was not earthly. That's what it means.

It's no longer I, but Christ lives in me. So to have our minds set on the things above, Paul says in Galatians 6, that's the other verse I wanted to show you. Galatians 6 and verse 14.

God forbid, may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. So here we understand how we can turn from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of God. How is it? In the same way that God takes a human being out of this world into heaven, there's only one way God takes a human being out of this world into heaven.

That's through death. The man dies, that believer, and he goes to heaven. And here the message of the gospel is, which most people have not understood, is that while I'm living, I can have that inward death that delivers me from the grip this world has on me.

I'm free. Think of a man who physically dies. He's finished.

After that, he's not bothered about what people think of him or people say about him. Even the praise of men will not buff him up, and the criticism of men will not disturb him. There's a man who's really dead.

And the wonderful message of the gospel is that I can experience that now, where the praise of men will not buff me up and the criticism of men will not disturb me. And where I'm not seeking honor. Do you know the number of people in even in CFC churches who are seeking honor for themselves? You think such people have died? You think a dead man in a coffin here will seek honor? He's not interested in honor.

He's living before God. He's already left. That is the message of the gospel.

And it's very easy for all of us to detect whether we are still living on this earth or whether we already died. We can talk about the cross and all that, taking up the cross and all, but here's the test. Where's your mindset on the approval of men, honor of men, earthly things? Then you haven't died.

Face it. Just face up to the fact you have not died. You're still very alive.

We talk about death. In the last conference, I was telling a story which some of you probably heard, but I'll repeat it for the benefit of everyone. They were acting a drama in one church about Jesus hanging on the cross.

And one fellow was hanging there. And some people were supposed to act as though they are spitting on him and all that. But one guy in that drama, he really got angry and actually spat on this guy.

And he said, wait till I come down from the cross. I'll teach you a lesson. That is how many people are crucified with Christ.

It's all an act. We use the right language, but we're not crucified. We are very much alive.

And we wonder why sin has power over us. We wonder why the opinions of men disturb us. Paul said, I'm crucified.

The world is crucified to me. I'm crucified to the world. And the living Bible paraphrases so good.

He says, now I have as little interest in this world as a dead man has. I've been gripped by that. I have as little interest in this world as a dead man has.

I'm crucified to the world. Have you met Christians like that? Who are not interested in honor, or money, or fame, or pleasure, but who are living ornery lives. I mean, they're not sanniyasis or sadhus living in the jungle.

They are living ornery lives. They are earning their living, supporting their families, educating their children, and all that. But their mind is not there.

Their mind is set on things above. You've probably heard me use the illustration of a rubber band. See, this is heaven, and this is earth down here.

The pulpit is earth, and this mic is heaven. So if I tie a rubber band here, my mind is set on the things above. I have to stretch to the earth for all my earthly duties, my work in the office, or a factory, your mother's, your work in the kitchen, you're looking after the children, you've got to stretch.

For all your earthly things, you have to stretch it, stretch it. But when you've finished all your earthly work, what happens to this rubber band? It must spring back to the things of heaven. That is the mindset on the things above, where when you've finished all your earthly tasks, and that may take 10 hours a day, okay, 10 hours a day, the rubber band is stretched to many earthly things, and you do your earthly job first class.

But when all your earthly jobs and responsibilities are done, then where does your mind switch back to? Is it to heavenly things? With many believers, it's not like that. The rubber band is tied to the earth, and it's stretched whenever we have a meeting for a couple of hours for heavenly things. And once the meeting is over, back again to some earthly thing, and it's the other way around.

The mind is set on the things above and occasionally stretched to heavenly things. That's why the Christian life is so unsatisfying. They live like that year after year after year after year.

They can even get a reputation with others that they're very spiritual, because the others don't even know what spirituality is. And that's why their Christian life is so unsatisfying. But people may say, well then, how am I supposed to take care of earthly things? I'll tell you.

You know the well-known verse, Matthew 6.33, Seek the kingdom of God first and his righteousness, and all your earthly needs will be added to you. It's true. It's really true.

I remember when I quit my earthly job in the Navy 51 years ago. People in the Navy who were my fellow officers said, hey Zack, how are you going to support yourself now? I said, I worked in the Navy here for nearly eight years. Every month the Navy paid me, faithfully.

There was not a single month when they did not pay me. First of the month, I got my salary. So I told them, haven't you seen that? You think God is less faithful than the Navy? No.

It's because people don't really know what it is to serve God and to live for him that they have a lot of problems. So in order to prove that I was really trusting God, what I did was, I took my entire savings in my bank for eight years I'd worked and gave it all away for Christian work and made my bank account zero. Well, those days the minimum balance was four rupees.

So we had to keep four rupees in the account to keep the account alive. And I said, I'm going to trust you, Lord. Let me really see.

I mean, if it is not true that if you seek God's kingdom first and other things will not be added, then I might as well go back into a secular job. What am I going to preach? I want to prove is really right or not. I said, it's like stepping out on the water like Peter.

You can't walk on the water unless God upholds you. It's exactly like that. For me, it was, I was coming out of a ship like Peter came out of a boat and I was going to walk on water.

No support underneath, no sending reports, no going to rich churches, no nothing. I said, Lord, I'm going to trust you to take care of me. And of course, I got very little.

My income dropped 85%. That's fine. But I didn't die.

I didn't starve. But I said, Lord, I want to prove, even if it's with a struggle, I want to prove that if I seek your kingdom first and I never seek man's help, that you'll take care of me. I can tell you, all these 51 years, God's taken care of us as a family.

Sometimes with a little, we needed only a little. When we needed more, he gave us more. We have to have some experiences like that.

You may not be called to full-time Christian work like me. Only one in a thousand are called to full-time Christian work. But everybody must seek the kingdom of God first.

You must have your own experience of how you put God first and took a risk for something. For example, you wouldn't tell a lie in an office and you may lose your job. Fine.

I put God first and if I lose my job, God will take care of me and my family in some other way. That's what I mean. I remember one brother who I didn't even know him.

He was not a part of CSE. He was an accountant who came up without an accountant's degree by experience. He had a job in a company and he was a Roman Catholic and he got converted.

And when he was born again, he told his boss, now, I'm sorry, I cannot write these false accounts to deceive the income tax people. I have to write the correct accounts. They said, no, then you can't stay here.

We want somebody who will falsify the accounts to fool the income tax people. He said, I can't do it. I'm a Christian now.

Then you got to leave. And he was a grown man with one child, I mean a grown daughter. And he knew that if he lost that job because he had no degree, he wouldn't get another job.

And the people in his church who were believers, this was down in Kerala, told him, yeah, you got to adjust to live in this world. You got to adjust. You can't just be so rigid saying, I won't change the accounts or anything like that.

Otherwise, you won't be able to live. But his conscience troubled him and he said, sorry, I can't do it. And he lost his job.

But he had read some book of mine and he didn't know me. And amazingly, he took a train and came all the way from Kerala to Bangalore to see me. I never met him before.

And we have sometimes people who land up at our door whom I've never seen before, who've read a book of mine. And he said, I want to see you, Brother Zach, for a little while. I said, sure.

He said, I came here only to ask you one question. And he told the whole story. And he said, all the believers in my church said, no, no, no, you got to adjust.

You can't be so rigid about all these things. Tell me, Brother Zach, because I respect you. Was it right what I did? I said, absolutely right.

100%. And the advice those other believers gave you was absolutely wrong. And now, I said, what will happen to you? You've got a wife and a child.

Maybe you'll starve. Maybe you won't get a job. Maybe you will die.

Maybe your wife will die of starvation. Your daughter will die of starvation. Praise the Lord.

Go to heaven, dying of starvation, rather than telling a lie and living on this earth. That's the type of advice I give. But then I said, don't worry, you won't die.

Because there's a promise in scripture which says, those who honor me, says the Lord, I will honor. You have honored God. He will honor you.

I said, I can tell you from my own experience. I faced so many situations like this in the Navy. And I would say, I will not do that, sir.

That's wrong. It's against my conscience. I would get transferred from there and half an hour once I got a transfer.

It's okay. But I will not do what goes against my conscience. And I said, God will honor you.

I don't know how he'll do it. I don't have any influence to get you a job. But I can pray for you and I have influence with God.

I can ask him to give you a job. And sure enough, very soon, he got another job, which he worked until he retired. Much better job, he was much happier.

Does God honor those who honor him? What do you think? 1 Samuel 2, verse 30 says, those who honor me, I will honor. And I told him, brother, if God does not honor you, you will be the first person in 6000 years that God did not honor. First person, it won't happen.

Everybody whom God has honored in these 6000 years, from the time of Abel, God has honored. They may get killed like Abel, that's another thing. But God honors them.

So many of the martyrs, Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified. They died.

That's okay. But God honored them. Do you want to be a person, I want to ask all of you here, one whom God honors.

I tell you, when I even say that, my whole heart rises up and say, Lord, I want to be one like that, whom you honor. I couldn't care less for the empty honor of men, which is garbage. Think God honoring you.

It can be your portion. If you seek the kingdom of God first, and I can tell you, you will never lack anything. You may not become a millionaire, thank God.

Maybe if you became a millionaire, you'll go away from God. Your children won't get the best jobs in the world, but God will take care of them. They'll follow Jesus.

That's the main thing. Seek the kingdom of God first. The kingdom of God is what the church is supposed to be.

And that's different from the kingdom of earth. And the only way to move from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of God is to die, not physically, but to die with Jesus Christ. That's why Jesus said, if you want to follow me, you have to take up your cross, die to yourself every day.

So it's a daily thing. Because I may have died to myself yesterday and to earthly things. And today I may be very alive to the things of earth.

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. The kingdom of God is not all these earthly things. Whether God prospers me or not is not the main thing.

The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Earthly things, what is necessary is added. And one of the wonderful things I discovered was, you know, I can really say that in my own experience that God never gave my wife and I much in the beginning because he knew it was not good for us.

He gave us very little. And he saw whether we were faithful with that. Then he increased the circle, gave us a little more and a little more according to our need.

You know, my God will supply all your what need, Philippians 4.19, not all that you want. Is any child here who's got a foolish father who gives you everything you want? I hope not. Any child who's got a foolish mother who gives everything you want? No, your parents give you what you need.

God is not a foolish father. He gives you all that you need. That's true, according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

It's wonderful. And isn't it wonderful to go through life saying, I never compromised my convictions at any time. Whatever the price I had to pay, if I had to lose my job, lose my job.

I wouldn't tell a lie to get a visa. No, I don't need to go to Dubai to honor God. If I have to tell a lie to go somewhere, I don't want to go there.

I told my children that when they were applying for admission in colleges in the U.S., all their colleagues were writing false marks. I said, don't ever do that. Don't get a false certificate.

Don't get false marks. I don't want you to go if there's one thing in that application which is wrong. Because you'll go outside the will of God.

And if something happens to you, some accident or something, it happened because you were outside the will of God. The safest place on the earth is the center of the will of God. That's what I kept on telling my children.

I said, don't think this place is better, that place is better. No, the center of the will of God is the best place for you. So, are we going to suffer loss? We're so scared our children won't get what they want.

My father was a God-fearing believer. He was born again before I was born. I'm very thankful that I had a good inheritance.

But he could not understand when I, I mean, when I left the Navy, he was happy. I was serving the Lord. But he could not understand why I was sitting with four or five people in my home, trying to build a small group when I could be traveling all over with my gift of preaching.

He couldn't understand it. He said, he actually told me this. He said, you got a gift like Billy Graham.

You should be traveling the world preaching, not sitting here four or five people in this house. I said, Dad, I'm not called to be Billy Graham. I'm called to build a church.

He didn't understand. He was a good man. But the vision of the church is not given to everyone.

So, he couldn't understand. Then he told me, here you've got four children. They were all small.

The youngest one was two years old then. And this is just before my father died. He said, you know, it's very difficult to educate children in colleges nowadays.

How are you going to take care of them? I said, Dad, if I stop seeking the kingdom of God now, I won't even be able to pay the hundred rupees school fees now. But if I seek the kingdom of God first, God will take care of my children. And that time my oldest son was only in seventh standard.

And then my father died. It's okay. So, he never lived to see how God gave scholarships to all my children and took care of their education.

He never lived to see it. He never lived to see how God blessed those two or three families meeting in our home and how God prospered it and blessed and planted churches. He never saw it.

And he's in heaven today. I don't know whether people in heaven can see what's happening on earth. I don't know.

But if they can, I think my dad will say to me, son, you were right and I was wrong. Sometimes when we take a stand, I'm not talking about unspiritual people. My father was not an unspiritual man.

He was a really spiritual man, very generous to God's people and all that. But the vision of the church he didn't have. There are many good people who don't have a vision of the church, of building the church of Jesus Christ.

And they always think, oh, but then I'll have to sacrifice this. And I say, what sacrifice? Tell me, what sacrifice can you make which God will not repay? I have never made a sacrifice in my life. I don't believe I have.

When I look at the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary, all the things that we call sacrifices disappear. I'll tell you honestly, I'm not trying to be humble. I don't believe I have made a sacrifice in my life for Christ.

You say that's a lie. No, it's the honest truth and I'll tell you how. See, why is it you don't see any stars in the sky right now? You think the stars have disappeared or you can't see them? It's because the light of the sun is so bright that a little child will say, hey, dad, what happened to all the stars? They've gone.

How many stars in the sky, my son? Zero. How many sacrifices have you made for the Lord? Zero. Because the light of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is so bright.

And I want to say that to you. If some of you remember the sacrifices you have made for Jesus, you are in the darkness. That's why you can see the stars.

When you come into the sunlight, you will not see a single star. You will not see a single sacrifice. You will say like me, I have never made one sacrifice for the Lord.

I want to ask you honestly, in your mind, do some of you feel you've made some sacrifice for the Lord? You feel, ah, that day I gave up that for the Lord or I gave up this for the Lord. You are in the darkness. That's why you see those stars.

Come into the sunlight and see the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. I keep that always before me. It's one of the things the Lord taught me from early in my Christian life to meditate on the cross.

And I've learned so much just meditating on the cross, especially the meaning of the word sacrifice. I don't believe any of us have made. If you went to the early apostles, you know what Paul went through? Let me just show you this.

Let me close this session with this. 2 Corinthians 11. He writes to the Corinthians.

He says, 2 Corinthians 11, 23, the last part of it, 2 Corinthians 11, 23, the middle, it says, I have beaten, I've been beaten so many times, I can't even count. I've been, I mean, if I were beaten once, I would remember it. Paul was beaten so many times since I've lost count.

And I've been in death, in danger of death so many times. And I received 39 whips from the Jews five times, 195 lashes on my back. Three times they beat me with rods.

And once they stoned me almost to death. Three times I was shipwrecked. Shipwrecked, Paul, were you going on a ship to make money somewhere, some business plan? No, I was going to preach the gospel.

And you mean when you were going to preach the gospel, God allowed your ship to be wrecked? Yes. How many times? Three times. God allowed your ship to be wrecked.

You got a flat tire in the car when you went to preach the gospel. Your ship was wrecked. Yeah.

One night and one day I spent when the ship was wrecked, I was in the sea for 24 hours. Good thing he knew how to swim. But 24 hours he was in the sea.

I said, how come, Paul, what were you doing? I went to preach the gospel, the ship got wrecked, and I was 24 hours struggling and somehow God saved my life. I have been in so many journeys, cannot even count the number of journeys I've been in. And I tell you, journey is not an easy thing.

I've been in so many dangers when traveling on rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from countrymen and dangers from the heathen and dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false believers who tried to dupe me. I've been in labor and hardship, many sleepless nights while traveling and preaching and sitting with believers till late at night, in hunger and thirst, sometimes fasting, sometimes going without food, sometimes food not available, in cold, without blankets, exposure. And on top of that, the most difficult of all, the burden of problems in different churches, problems with elders, problems with different believers, they're weighed down upon Paul.

Paul, can you sum up all this? He said, okay, I'll sum it up for you. 2 Corinthians 4, verse 17. This is the way he sums it all up.

Our momentary light affliction. How do you like that? All of this, how can you sum it up? Just for a moment. A moment means, see, Paul lived for about 67 years.

He was converted when he was 30. So his sufferings were for 37 years. 37 years compared to millions of years in eternity is a moment.

You know that, no? Compared 37 years with millions of years in eternity, it's a moment. This is only for a moment. Oh, just for 37 years I had these problems.

And it's a very light affliction. Was that light what you just read? Why did he think this is no sacrifice? I'll tell you, because he had seen the cross of Jesus so clearly. And he's only light affliction.

And boy, when I get up into glory, the eternal weight of glory that God's going to give me for all this light affliction that I went through, he cannot even compare it. He said, I can't even, it's beyond comparison. It's like comparing a million dollars to one cent.

I spent one cent and God gave me a million dollars. Wow. I gave so little to God and he gave me so much.

There is a man who was really freed from the kingdom of earth, whose values were not in terms of, I made a sacrifice here, I gave up this, I gave up that, which so many believers are all occupied with those things. Your whole life changes when your rubber band is tied up here, when your mind is set on the things above. Everything on earth looks so small.

It's like, you travel in a plane and that skyscraper looks like a toy house. And the cars are all like toy cars. There's not much difference up in the plane between a Mercedes Benz and then, what's the cheapest car? Maruti or something.

Not much difference when you're up there. On earth, it looks tremendously different. So if these things mean much to you, big house, fancy car, a lot of money, bank account, you can be pretty sure you're somewhat in the old covenant.

Your mind is set on earthly things. And that is the reason why so many other things in your Christian life don't seem to be going the way it should. I hope there'll be a change.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we pray that we shall be lifted up in our spirit to see things from heaven's standpoint. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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