

The Lord Encourages Us Constantly

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of valuing and utilizing the various ministries within the church, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to build a strong foundation for the body of Christ. It also highlights the need to give all glory to God for any accomplishments or blessings, avoiding the trap of pride even when dressed in humility. The speaker encourages a lifestyle of constant prayer, seeking God's guidance and acknowledging His sovereignty in all aspects of life and ministry.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:20, Acts 17:30, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Luke 5:15, Isaiah 42:8

Topics: "Valuing Church Ministries", "Humility and God's Glory"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, as we come together again, we pray that you will minister to our hearts from your word. We know that there is an abundance in the house of God.

You want our cups to run over. You never give us stingy, mean pieces, but always in abundance. Thank you, Father.

We pray that we shall hear from you and be drawn closer to you. Give us the right word according to our need. We want to meet with you, Lord Jesus.

Everyone here, in Jesus' name, Amen. Do you know which was the last miracle that Jesus did? Who can tell me? Raise your hand. All you Bible scholars, nobody knows? Which one? Loudly.

John 21, correct. It is, as far as we know, the only miracle that he did after his resurrection. All the miracles were before the resurrection.

He may have done others, but this one is described. The last chapter of the last gospel with a message that Jesus wants to give to all his servants, especially those who are discouraged. It's very easy to get discouraged.

I remember the days before God filled me with the Holy Spirit and anointed me. Before those days, I used to get discouraged very often. I was born again, but I wasn't having clear guidance in my life, and I would sit like this for many hours, discouraged.

But it all changed. Discouragement was one of my biggest sins. It's a sin, because it is like saying, God does not care for me right now.

Or it's like saying, right now the devil is on the throne. He's not. The devil is never on the throne.

God is on the throne, and he always remembers his own. So I want to testify to you how discouragement went away from my life completely. I wanted it to go.

God filled me with the Holy Spirit, and it went. It's not that I've not had problems, not that I've not been tempted to be discouraged. It's become less and less and less.

You know, the devil fights with you, fights with you. After some time, it becomes weak and weak and weak, and finally you hardly get tempted in that area. But in the early days, I had to fight it.

And the temptation to discouragement would come, and I would keep on praying in tongues, in unknown tongues. Keep on praying in unknown tongues to God until the discouragement went. So I found the gift of tongues was, I never used the gift of tongues in public.

I believe I have used it like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14. He said, you know, I thank God I speak in tongues more than all of you. 1 Corinthians 14 verse 18 and 19.

But in the church, I will only speak five words in a known language, than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue. Here is a man who spoke in tongues more than any Pentecostal today. And he was not just blabbering, abba, abba, abba, no, no, no, no.

He was speaking a language. An unknown tongue is a language. When I pray in unknown tongues to God, it is not abba, abba, abba, no.

It's a language, just like English or Hindi or any other language. But it's a language I don't know, I don't understand. But it says in verse 4, it builds you up.

Reading the Bible builds you up. Praying builds you up. Fellowship with other believers builds you up.

Speaking in tongues builds you up. I said, Lord, I need it all because I get so much attacks from the devil and even from other believers. I have to be strong.

So, he said, in the church I'll speak 5 words with a known language, than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue, teaching me, 10,000 divided by 5 is how much? 2,000. That speaking in your known language is 2,000 times better than speaking in tongues. How many Pentecostals believe that? Paul believed it in public.

In public, to speak in your mother tongue is 2,000 times better than speaking in tongues. But I've seen immature people babble away in tongues because they don't know the Lord, they don't know the word. Speaking in tongues is a gift primarily for private use.

For me, it was a great relief from pressure of discouragement. And sometimes, you know, when to cast out a demon, to strengthen myself in faith, I would pray silently in tongues. And I remember one case where, it was before CFC started, I was praying for an old lady who was in hospital, and she was sick, and she did not have any family members to take care of her.

And I don't know, she was quite old, so the only thing I could pray for her was, Lord, take her away. But you can't go to hospital and say, Lord, let this woman die. You can't pray like that.

You know what I did? I prayed in tongues. A few days later, the Lord took her home. So there are a few places like that, it has turned out.

But my point is this, that every gift has a particular place for its use. And don't become a fanatic over any gift. Where there's a need for it, God, Jesus didn't go around healing everybody.

It says in the Pool of Bethesda, there were hundreds of people who were sick, He healed one person. People who don't know God will just go around healing everybody. Jesus walked past the temple gate, there was a man who was begging there for 40 years, lame.

You know that story? 40 years. And you know, he asked Peter and John for money. Peter said, silver and gold I have none, but what I have given you in the name of Jesus, get up and walk.

And he walked. And it says in the next chapter, 5,000 people were joined to the church. Now Jesus came before that, for three and a half years, he walked up and down that road, up and down that gate.

And that man must have asked Jesus, please give me some money. And Jesus would have said, Judas, give him some money. Next time he asked for money, Father, what shall I do? Give him some money.

Judas gives him money. Father, shall I heal him? Father says, no. Judas, give him some money.

Jesus gave money. Then Peter comes, three and a half years later, heals him. What is the result? 5,000 people are converted.

What would have happened if Jesus had healed him earlier? You know the answer. 5,000 people would have not come to the Lord. That miracle is what brought them.

So I see from that, Jesus did not go around healing, healing, healing. He was led by the Lord, even when there was such a needy person. For him, the need was not the call.

The Father's will was the call. There may be a great need. I'll give you an example of that in Jesus' words in John chapter 4. In India, there's a great need.

Some of you from other countries. There's a great need. But the need is not the call to act.

There are many missionaries who go out like this. They come to a meeting in western countries. They say, look at India, all those people dying without the gospel in India.

Look at all those millions of Hindus. Africa, a lot of people in the jungles dying. How many of you will come and volunteer to be missionaries to India and Africa? A number of young people will come, moved emotionally in the soul.

And some of them go and make a mess of missionary work. I've seen so many missionaries in India. I think out of the hundreds of missionaries I've met, I respect about two or three who are really godly.

The others, I've sometimes said, why did this chap cross the ocean and come here? Did he come here to mess up God's work here? But see here how Jesus acted. John chapter 4. See the need. John 4.35, middle of that verse.

I say to you, John 4.35, lift up your eyes. Look on the fields. They are white for harvest.

And he who reaps is receiving wages. The need is great. We must see the need.

But the need is not the call. What do I do? My principle of action is not the need. My principle of action is in verse 34.

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. That is my action. There's a great need in Africa.

Lord Jesus, don't you want to go there? There's a great need in Rome. All those worshipping idols with Caesar and all that. Don't you want to go there, Jesus? No.

What about China, India, Lord Jesus, when he was on earth? You know that Jesus moved in a small area. The whole nation of Israel was what, about 100, 200 kilometers? That's all. He traveled only in that area, smaller than Kerala.

That is all. His ministry was there. The whole world was dying of sinners.

There is a need. I see the need. But my father has told me to be here.

I'll be here. It's wonderful to be like that. There are many preachers who have a passion to say, I went to 35 countries.

I went here, there. Not Jesus. He went once outside Israel, once or twice.

Only in Israel. He said, my food is to do the will of him who sent me. So, in John chapter 21, what we learn is, without me you can do nothing.

You know, in John 21, Peter was fed up with being an apostle. Because he had failed. He had denied the Lord three times.

So, now he will not say, if all men deny you, I will not deny you. You know, his mouth is shut. So, he tells the others, verse 3, I am going fishing, meaning, I am going back to my fishing career.

I am going back to my fishing. No more of this apostle business. I am a failure.

They said, we are also pretty fed up with being apostles. We are also a failure. We forsook the Lord and got so many.

We didn't stand by him. He will also come with you. I think fishing is better than anything.

And I felt the Lord was saying to them, okay, you are expert fishermen, is it? Try. Go and try. So, they tried all night and they caught nothing.

That was God's plan. These expert fishermen caught nothing. And what we learn from that is when God allows you to fail in some area, that is the way he breaks you.

And it says in verse 4, when the day was now breaking, by the time the disciples also were broken, Jesus stood on the beach. And there is a sense of humor there, with a little smile. Jesus says, well, you went out fishing, did you get anything last night? No, Lord.

Okay. Cast your net on the other side. And immediately they get a huge catch of fish that they have never caught in their whole life.

Where were all those fish up to this time? They were obeying God's command, saying, don't go into Peter's net. I have to teach him a lesson. Finally, the Lord said, okay, now you can go.

God has to teach us through failure. You know, when I had a burden to build a New Testament church, 1965, when I was still in the Navy, I read the word of God. I sought to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

God showed me the fullness of the Spirit and a New Testament church. I was going to this Brethren Assembly and I was not happy there. There was one other brother also, who was also a bit fed up.

He was a foreigner. So we decided we'd start a New Testament church. And there was one rich lady there who had a house where we could meet.

So three of us started meeting. I don't think anybody else came. So we're going to be a New Testament church.

And we had everything. She was a rich lady. She had expensive bowls to carry the break bread and all that.

We met for two or three weeks and it was an absolute flop. God punctured the balloon. We came down to earth.

So there's an expression that says, like the dog comes back with its tail between its legs because it has been a failure. I went back to the Brethren Assembly with my tail between my legs because I failed. And they smiled at me, so you learned your lesson.

I said, yes, I learned my lesson. I'm not called to build church. That was my first Ishmael.

I was trying to help God like Abraham. I gave up. So for many years I said, no, I'm not called to.

Then in 1972 we moved to Bangalore. I said, now I'm going to build a New Testament church. So we started a meeting in our house where two or three people came.

Weekday. I didn't have the courage to start on Sunday. So we met.

So sometimes I traveled. Once when I traveled and I came back, I asked my wife, what did these two brothers who were there discuss while I was away? What is their subject? She said the main subject they discussed was should we close our eyes when we pray or open our eyes when we pray? Next meeting I closed down that church also. I said, no.

I said, Lord, I have produced two Ishmaels. I will never in my life try to start a church. I finished with it.

Never, never, never. I decided. I want to tell you, I kept that decision.

I never started the church in Bangalore. God pushed me into some situation and all of a sudden Brother Ian Robson and I found ourselves kicked out of somewhere. Okay, what to do? Start meeting in our home.

We started with a prayer meeting. It developed into a church. I had nothing to do with it.

People say Brother Zach planted a church. Absolute lie. Because I had nothing to do with it.

Peter couldn't say, I caught that. He didn't catch anything. In his own effort he caught zero.

But he was sincere and the Lord saw his sincerity and filled his net with, it says, John 21, 11, 153 large fish. Peter had never caught so many fish in his whole life. In his mind he was thinking, boy, if the Lord helps me like this I'll be the richest millionaire in Galilee in a few.

Of course, I'll give my 10% to God, definitely. But think of how much I can earn. One catch, 153 large fish.

Think of this. What is the price of one large fish in the market? It's pretty high in Bangalore. 153 fish in one day.

And then Jesus asks him, verse 15, Simon, do you love me more than these fish? It's a very searching question. Do you love me more than these fish? Jesus knew what Peter was thinking. I'm going to be the richest fisherman in Galilee and I'll pay my tithes to God.

Peter, I've not called you to catch fish. I've not called you to make money. I've called you for something far higher than that.

Dear brothers, have you heard the call of God? What has he called you for? Just to live a little more comfortably somewhere? Make a little more money somewhere? And teach your children also how to make a little more money? I hope you hear the Lord calling to you. Do you love me more than all these things? All these opportunities you have, do you love me more than these? We have to earn our living. I mean, I've taught and practiced that all these 45 years of CFC.

But I can say before God, I don't live to make money. Not at all. Zero.

God has prospered. When my father died, I received an inheritance from him. I never asked for it.

And God somehow blessed and prospered it. So I've always had enough to live without depending on anybody. And he's prospered it so much that I have plenty now.

I don't deny that. But it is not my cleverness. I have nothing to do with it.

I just put the net in and the Lord put one, two, three fish into it. What shall I do? It is just to earn my living. But I say, Lord, I don't love those fish.

And the Lord says, Do you love me? Tend my lambs. Verse 15. That's what he's saying to you also.

Take care of my little lambs. Small ones. There's a story that the Jewish people have.

It's not a true story. But it's a folk tale. It has come through the years.

We don't know whether it's true or not. There's a story among the Jewish people about Moses. That when he was, before he became the leader, he was looking after the flock of Jethro.

And he suddenly saw one little lamb, small lamb, going towards a river to drink water. He saw it only after he reached the river. He looked and he saw, Hey, that lamb has gone there already.

He ran and picked up the lamb and said, If I had known you were thirsty, I would have carried you here so that you didn't have to come all the way here. And a voice from heaven said, Truly, you are fit to be the leader of Israel. There's a lot of truth in that.

The one who can care for the little lambs so that they don't have to struggle but is willing to carry them is fit to be the leader of God's people. So, take care of my lambs first. And again, a second question.

Do you love me? He says, Yes, Lord. You know that I love you. Then, take care of my sheep, which is the older ones, who are 16.

Not just tend them, but shepherd them, guide them in the right path. And a third time, verse 17. Do you love me? Now Peter is shattered.

Once upon a time, he would say, even if all deny you, I will not deny you. He would have said, even if all don't love you, I love you. Now he doesn't say.

He says, Lord, I'm so unsure of myself. I'll tell you this, my dear brothers. The more I have grown in the Lord, the more unsure I am of what I think is my devotion to Christ.

I used to think much more earlier that I'm very devoted to Christ. I think of it less and less now. I say, Lord, I don't know.

I don't know whether I'm devoted to you. I say, like Peter, Lord, you know all things. You know that to the best of my knowledge, I love you.

But if there is some small area in my heart that I don't have light on, I can't say. But that's enough for the Lord. He says, that's good enough.

From there we grow, but it keeps us in humility. Dear brothers, let me urge you as a fellow brother with you, don't be so quick to say, oh Lord, I love you. Say, verse 17, Lord, you know all things.

To the best of my knowledge, I think I love you. But I want to, I want to love you more. And the Lord will say again, tend my sheep.

So what is the qualification to be a shepherd of God's people? A fervent love for Jesus Christ. How much Bible knowledge do you think Peter had? I'll tell you, much less than everybody sitting here. He didn't even have a Bible.

Those days the only Old Testament was in the synagogue. You had to go there and read it. But he had something which many of us may not have.

He had a fervent love for Christ. And that's what we need. A love for Christ that is more than love for parents or relatives or anybody.

That will qualify you to take care of God's sheep. Please remember that. And then, something else he told him.

He turned around and said to him, verse 19, follow me. You know, he said, when you're young, verse 18, you go where you like. When you're old, somebody else will stretch out your hands, verse 18, and take you where you don't like to go.

And he was telling him how he would be crucified one day. And he said, follow me. And here's the mistake that Peter made now.

He's always making mistakes. It's okay. Lord, you told me how I'm going to die.

What about this John who's here? Is he going to suffer like me or is he going to have an easy time? Never forget this answer, dear brothers. When you look around at other believers or other brothers, you find they're having a much more comfortable life than you. They have a car and you have a scooter or they have a scooter and you have a bicycle and you wonder why.

What about him? Why can't I be like that? Wonderful answer. What is that to you? Verse 22. What is that to you? That's none of your business.

I may want him to live until I come 2,000 years. He may live up to 2,000 years. What's that to you? Mind your own business.

Don't compare yourself. Why is my lot I'm going to die like this and he's going to have a cushy life? Why is he having it easier than me? It can be a tremendous temptation for you because you're finding it rough in your situation compared to some other brother who's also an elder but he's having a relatively easy life. Maybe not.

Maybe he has other problems you know nothing about. What is that to you? Please remember this word always. It's been a tremendous help to me.

What is that to you? If I want to give him a car or a jet plane, that's my business. What's that to you? You ride your bicycle and go along. I remember the days when here in Bangalore I rode a scooter for 42 years.

Well, I never had an accident. Never hurt anybody else. But I used to sometimes see these fellows half my age who are in full-time Christian work who joined up with some American organization who would drive big Innova cars in those days.

And they knew me. And they would see me driving with my wife sitting behind me on the scooter and they would go past in their big car and I would smile at them and say, this is my testimony. I don't depend on American money like you.

I'm not ashamed to ride a scooter. I've always been a very happy man. What is that to you? Haven't I taken care of you? And I can tell you I'm 80 years old now and I have to testify the Lord has taken amazing care of me.

And I look around at so many other people who are 80 years old and I look around in the flight sometimes and say, is anybody here older than me? I don't think so. My wife and I are always about the oldest in any flight. And we're driving so many times here and there.

God has been so good to us and I say, what more do I want, Lord? I don't want all types of comforts. Give me the opportunity to serve you, to tend your sheep, to tend your lambs, take care of the sheep. I'm more than happy.

It's a wonderful life. I'll tell you, I left my job in the Navy 1966, 53 years ago. I gave away all the money I earned in all my naval service for God's work and left with zero in my bank account.

I said, Lord, I trust you. And I said, Lord, if I don't find a place to sleep, I'll sleep in the railway stations. In India, some railway stations, they allow you to sleep there overnight.

But I will serve you. I will never ask anybody for money and I will trust you. But I tell you, God cares and God cares for His children, cares for His servants.

I can tell you, in all these 56 years, God's been amazingly good to me. He's blessed my family, blessed my children. And I say to you that as a testimony, you honor God, determined to honor God and He will honor you.

And I'll tell you this, if you honor God and He does not honor you, you will be the first person in 3,000 years since God said that in the days of Samuel, those who honor me, I will honor. You'll always honor those who honor Him. And that promise, my God, will supply all your need according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

Physical need, financial need, healing needs. When my children were sick, yeah, all of them used to get some sickness or the other. I would lay hands on them and pray for them in Jesus' name.

I want you to do that for your children. Sometimes CFC people can be so much against the Pentecostal healing that we don't even believe that Jesus can heal or do anything for us. I'm not saying Jesus will heal everybody, but I believe He taught us to lay hands on the sick and pray when they are sick.

And I do that. I don't dictate to God whether He should heal or not, but every single time I would lay hands and pray for even now, if my children are sick, I pray for them. Or some brother comes to me or sister, sometimes strangers come to me at the end of the meeting and say, Brother Zach, my wife is sick, will you pray? I say, sure, I'll lay hands and pray for her.

I believe in that. We must trust the Lord more for healing, for our financial needs, for physical needs. Sometimes when I'm sick, many times I lay my hands on my own head.

I say in Jesus' name, Lord heal me. Lay your hands, kneel placed hands on me and heal me. Sometimes when I'm very weak to go to a meeting, I take that verse which says I will go in the strength of the Lord my God.

I take that verse, I think that's Psalm 71 I think. I'll go in the strength of the Lord my God. And I go.

We must be bold in claiming the promises of God. God has amazing things to do for us. And even if we have failed in the past, many of us can feel so bad Oh Lord, I've hurt so much and I've messed up so many years of my life.

Don't get discouraged. Discouragement is a no entry road. You know some roads there's a big X. Don't go in there.

You can drive this way but not in that way. Whenever you see discouragement there's a no entry. Don't go in there.

You can come out but don't go in. The other road which has got a no entry is self-condemnation. That's a great tactic of the devil to condemn yourself.

See you could have done that better. Why did you do like that? Why did you fail here? Why didn't you take that more seriously? And you condemn yourself. I'll tell you about a dream I had years ago in the early days of CFC.

God used to sometimes give me dreams. And one of the dreams was in the dream I saw myself coming back after speaking in some big, not a CFC conference but some other conference I used to be invited those days here and there and I saw myself coming back in some place not Bangalore, some place. I was alone.

I finished the meeting and I was walking back to the room where I was staying and I really felt I had great liberty that day God had helped me tremendously in the dream and I was walking back so happy and I heard this voice behind me that was not good enough. You could have done better. And suddenly in my dream I was discouraged.

And in my dream I said, Lord, why is this? Whenever you speak face to face with me, you're always encouraging me and now I've come back after serving you. You say, why? You could have done better. I'm so discouraged.

And I heard the Lord say to me in my dream turn around and see who is saying that. And in my dream I turned around and I saw this black figure. It was the devil.

Ran away. I learned something that day I have never forgotten. Even a voice which says you could have done better.

You think that's the holiest word? It's not. It's the devil to discourage you. See, sometimes I used to get birthday cards from my little children when they were 2-3 years old just learning the alphabet Happy Birthday Daddy and the D will not be written this way.

It's written the other way. You know, when they're learning how to write A and D it's all crooked. And I get this card in the morning this spelling that D is crooked and I don't call my son and say, why did you put D like that? You think I'll say that to him? I'll hug him with tears and say I'm so happy.

I don't care what your spelling is. See the heart. Remember that.

God sees your heart when you made a mistake in your service. You tried to serve him but you bungled up something. I've done it so many times.

I gave some wrong advice somewhere. I shouted at one brother thinking he made the mistake in that audio connection. Afterwards I discovered he did not make that mistake.

Somebody else. I went back immediately and I hugged him and I said, I'm young chap, younger than my sons. I said, I'm sorry please forgive me.

I should not have spoken to you like that. So, we make mistakes but I don't condemn myself. No.

I say, Lord, I'm not perfect. This is all I can do. I write D crooked, I write E crooked.

I'm growing. Give me a few years, I'll write it straight. I will not do it like this forever.

I'm learning the alphabet. I'm judging myself. And little by little I learn how to spell the words.

I begin to learn to spell the difficult words. So don't ever get discouraged. Self-condemnation.

No entry road. Never enter that. No matter how much you bungled up.

And the great example. The Apostle Paul. You know the verse in Psalm 139 which says, that God had a plan for you before you were born.

It's one of my favorite verses. While you were in your mother's womb, Psalm 139 verse 13 verse 16, in my mother's womb you saw my unformed substance and while I was not even born in your book, in your book means in your mind. God doesn't have books like us.

That is his mind. You wrote down how many days I should live on this earth. Before I was even born.

How long am I going to live? Am I going to reach 100 years? God has written that in his book. It will happen. It was interesting, the other day I prayed to the Lord.

I said, Lord, I have no love to live on this rotten earth. To depart and to be with Christ is far better. But I don't want to leave my wife alone and struggle.

So I don't want to be selfish. And if you allow me help me to live up to 100 years. You know, some people think that's daring.

I'm not an adult. I'm a child. I'm a little child sitting on my father's lap.

And you know when a little child sits on his father's lap. Two year old child. Daddy, buy me an elephant.

I want a real elephant. He can ask for anything. Or an airplane.

Give me a real airplane. Not these toy airplanes, a real one. I say, Lord, I'm like that child.

Help me to live for 100 years. But if that's not your will, that's fine. So then the thought came to me.

But it is already written before you were born. How long you should live. So how can you ask? Then I say, well, before I was born the Lord knew I would ask for it.

At this particular time. So that was also known to the Lord. So I'm not prophesying anything.

I'm just saying my only desire is to build the church. I have no interest in making money. No interest in becoming famous.

No interest in writing books or preaching sermons or going anywhere. Lord, as long as you want me to build your church. And now also that God has raised up so many Timothys to do it.

I want to pull back and be available. If they want to ask me anything. I will give them advice.

And this is how I'll give them advice. Brother, here is my advice. I'm not God.

Please remember. This is my advice from the little experience I have. Don't do it because I tell you.

Seek God. I want you to have a connection with God. Not with Zak Poonen.

And after taking my advice, if God also tells you, just do that. Do it. And if you feel in your spirit No, I don't feel I should do that here.

Don't do it. I will not be offended. You cannot make me offended.

It's impossible. I finished with getting offended many years ago. That is a kindergarten lesson.

Finished with it. I cannot get offended if you don't do it. Because I say, I'm not God.

Why should you listen to me? You don't sin by not listening to me. You sin if you don't listen to God. So listen to Him.

And then, if because you did not listen to me, you messed up the situation. It became all confusion. And then you come to me and say, Brother Zak, I'm sorry I didn't listen to you.

And the whole situation is a confusion. I will never say to you, I told you so. Those words will never come out of my mouth.

I will say to you, never mind brother. We'll fix it. God can solve everything.

The biggest problem was in Eden. God fixed that. You can fix this.

No problem. Never tell your children, I told you so. That is the voice of the expert.

Your children did not do something you told them to do and they messed it up, spoiled something, broke something. Always say, never mind son, never mind my girl. We'll fix it.

That is what will encourage them more than, I told you so. We spoil our children by giving such strong words. We need to humble ourselves.

None of us are experts. We all make mistakes and we learn from our mistakes. So, the Apostle Paul, God had a plan for his life before he was born.

But in that plan, did God plan that for 30 years he should persecute and kill Christians? That's impossible that God can have such a plan. But yet in his life, 30 years, he bungled up and killed Christians and persecuted them. And then at the age of 30, he turns to the Lord.

How can such a man fulfill God's plan if half his life is over? But the remaining 37 years, he lived so wholeheartedly for the Lord that at the age of 67, he writes in 2 Timothy 4, 2 Timothy 4 and verse 7, 2 Timothy 4, 7, he says, brothers, first of all he says, verse 6, the Lord has shown me the time of my departure has come. I'm going. But before I go, I want to tell you one thing.

Verse 7 middle, I have finished my appointed course. The plan God made for my life, I have fulfilled it 100%. I said, Paul, how did you fulfill it 100% when 30 years you messed up and did all types of wrong things? Isn't that a miracle? And I learned something there.

That God in his foreknowledge knows, knew, that Paul would mess up the first 30 years of his life and he made allowance for it. It's okay. He will still fulfill God's plan for my plan for his life.

That's why Acts 17.30 is one of my favorite verses. Acts chapter 17 and verse 30. That will help you also.

Please remember this verse all your life. Acts 17.30, the times of ignorance God overlooks. But now, from now on, repent or turn around.

So, there's a period of ignorance. For Paul, it was 30 years. Overlooks.

In my case, even though I was born again at the age of 19, for the next 16 years, I was still ignorant. I did many stupid things. I had no fellowship, no church, I had no spiritual father to sit and guide me.

If I had a problem, I didn't know whom to go to, whom shall I consult? No email, nothing. Even if there was email, whom shall I write it to? Whom can I get advice from? Nobody. So, I wasted a lot of years of my life.

So I say 35 years of my life, gone. For the last 45 years, I've been the best years of my life. From the time God filled me with the Holy Spirit, not that alone, but put me into a new covenant church.

Knowing the Word of God, being cleansed in the blood of Christ, it was all not enough. The other day I preached a message on six things with which we can hold the Christian life strongly. Six things.

When you hold something, hold. The first is the palm. Without the palm, you can't hold.

That is knowing God as your Father. He loves me as He loved Jesus. That's the first step.

You cannot hold anything. You cannot hold the Christian life strong if you don't begin there. Then the thumb.

The blood of Jesus has not only cleansed me from all my past life, it has declared me righteous. To be cleansed is one thing. To be declared righteous is another thing.

It is like saying, oh, it's as if you've never sinned in your whole life. Very different. Then the Word of God.

Man shall not live by every bread alone, but by every word that keeps on proceeding from God's mouth every day. The Word of God. The daily receiving of God's Word.

Then, one, two, three, four, being filled with the Holy Spirit continuously. Number five, taking up the cross every day. Any opportunity to die to myself, die.

Die. Some problem comes on your home, die. Some problem comes with your co-worker, die.

Somebody upsets you, die. There's a song I found on the internet the other day, which I sing to myself sometimes. The chorus is, let me die, let me die, let me die.

It's beautiful. It's a full song. Let me die, let me die, let me die.

Very important. Every day. With all this, I still could not have made it if it were not for the most important one at the end, the body of Christ.

That completed it for me. And that's when when CFC was born and I boy, in my last 45 years, God is my witness and I can testify. I've been in the best years of my life.

It gets better and better and better and better all the time. Dear brothers, build the body of Christ. Don't build a congregation where you are the pastor.

Even though you call yourself elder, you behave like a Pentecostal pastor. I'm sorry to say that. Some CFC elders behave like Pentecostal pastors.

And one proof of that is nobody else comes up to be a fellow elder in that church. No. Even after 20 years, there'll be nobody there.

Because he's the Maharaja. And he doesn't want any competition. It's like this father who does not want his child to get a degree higher than his.

Such people will not build the body of Christ. They are self-seeking diatrophies you read in the third episode of John. Who are building their own kingdom.

You think it's not happening in CFC? It is happening in CFC churches. That is why there's a message of mine on the internet and YouTube where I said, if you go to some place, look for a CFC church but if you find another Baptist church is more spiritual please join the Baptist church and don't go to the CFC church. I have preached that.

If you find the leader here is a self-seeking elder, CFC elder and that Baptist pastor is a humble God-fearing man who can help you to follow Jesus, better go to that Baptist church. Why do I say that? Because it's not in a denominational label that you can find spirituality. Who planted the church in Ephesus? You know, Paul.

Three years, but yet he tells them in Acts 20, I know that when I leave all you fellows will get people to follow after yourself. And what happened? Have you read the second letter to the Ephesians? The second letter to the Ephesians is in Revelation chapter 2. Exactly like Paul said. Church is destroyed.

What is that church saying? That is 95, that is about 30 years after Paul died. This church was planted by Paul. Brothers, don't forget, don't forsake this church.

This was planted by the great apostle Paul. So what? It's dead today. And if Paul comes today, he will not join your church in Ephesus.

You think if John Wesley comes to earth today, he will join the Methodist church? I don't think so. He will not. You think if William Booth came to earth today, he will join the Salvation Army? No.

So, don't be deceived by all these things. God wants us to forget the past, press on to the future, value the body of Christ. Jesus loved the church.

What does it say? Christ loved the church and laid down his life for it. You know where that is? Ephesians 5 verse 25. Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.

That's the word that's come to me. Love the church and lay down your life for it. Don't seek anything for yourself.

Lay down your life, your money, your time, your energy. People take advantage of you. Never mind.

Lay down your life. That is the way Jesus went. And if you go that way, I'll tell you something.

When you come to the end of your life, all of us will come to the end of our life one day. Even if the Lord comes, we will be able to look back over our life and say, at least the latter part of our life, say, Lord, there was a time in my life when you gave me light on the body of Christ. My life has been so wonderful after that.

You gave me light on the fatherhood of God, on being justified by the blood, hearing God's word daily, being filled with the Spirit continuously, taking up the cross every day and building the body of Jesus Christ. That's completed my life. I have such a firm grip on the Christian life now.

It can't slip. There are people who try to hold it with two fingers, the blood and the word, or two or three, but nothing like all six. Very, very important.

So let's pursue that way and say, Lord, in the short, God gives us all one life. Don't waste it. If you look back over your life now, can you be happy over how you have lived the past few years at least? The last three or four years of your life.

Are you satisfied with the way you have lived it? You say, Lord, I don't want the future to be just like that. I want it to go higher. I'm pressing on the upward way.

That's how it must be always in our life. I must not be satisfied with what I have reached. Always pressing.

Paul says, forgetting the things that are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We must always be pressing on, pressing on. And those who want to come along with us, well and good.

Those who don't want to come along with us, well, we're not going to drag them. We don't drag anybody. We say, follow me.

We don't drag anyone. Very, very important. Let us run the race.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, one thing I'll tell you, I believe with all my heart that Jesus is building his church. Matthew 16, 18. I will build my church.

I've often said that if I were living in Noah's time, I would invest everything I have in building the ark. All my time, energy would be devoted to building the ark. I don't care.

Other people can build their huge skyscrapers. I'll build the ark. And because I'm not living in Noah's time, I'm living now, I'll devote myself to building the church.

That doesn't mean you have to give up your secular jobs. Paul had a secular job. Paul was a Christian businessman.

But if you were to ask Paul, what are you, he'd say, I'm an apostle. Oh, apostle. I thought, Paul, you were a businessman stitching tents.

Oh, that's just to earn my living. My calling is to build the church. Can you say that? Can you say, what are you doing? I'm building the church.

Oh, I thought you were a teacher. No, no, no, that's just to earn my living. I'm building the church.

What a wonderful thing to see it like that. That's the way it should be. I've been thinking also of, you know, one of the differences.

We have a number of differences with other denominations. We don't believe that everybody should speak in tongues like the Pentecostals. We are not against the baptism in the spirit like the brethren.

We don't believe in having pastors like the Baptists. We believe in multiple elders. And hardly any church preaches daily taking up the cross.

We preach that. But there's one more area where we are different. We believe in apostolic ministry, prophetic ministry, teaching ministry, evangelistic ministry, shepherding ministry.

Turn to Ephesians 4. When Jesus ascended up to heaven, it says, verse 10, he ascended up into the heavens and after he ascended up into the heaven, he gave some gifts to the church on earth. And the gifts were not, he is not talking about tongues and prophecy and all that. Here are the gifts of people.

He gave certain people as gifts to the church. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors mean shepherds, and teachers. They are to help the saints to work, to build the body of Christ.

They are not to do all the work. Please see carefully. These five gifts are not the people doing all the work.

They are training the saints, all the believers, that all of them will work in service to build the body of Christ. So according to that verse, who is building the body of Christ? All the saints. Guided by these other gifts.

Now you know today, unfortunately in the world, there are many people who call themselves apostles, prophets so and so, they even put it as their title. Apostles so and so, prophets so and so. We don't believe in that.

We believe in those ministries, but we don't believe in calling anybody pastors so and so, apostles so and so, prophets so and so. No. Because it's the ministry that's more important than the person.

That's why we are different from other people. I say we believe in all those ministries, but we don't classify this is an apostle, that's an evangelist, that's a teacher. No.

The ministry must be there. Why is that important? Because it says in Ephesians chapter 2, you know that Christ is the foundation of our personal life. You read that in 1 Corinthians 3. No other foundation can nobody lay.

Let's go there first perhaps. 1 Corinthians 3. It says, verse 11, no man can lay a foundation than this one, which is Jesus Christ. That is for our personal life, the only foundation is Jesus Christ.

You must build on Jesus Christ as the foundation of your life. But when it comes to the church, be careful. The Bible says in Ephesians 2, Christ is only the cornerstone.

Ephesians 2.20. And the foundation is the apostles and prophets. That's what scripture says. The foundation of the church is the apostles and prophets.

The cornerstone is the most important stone. I'll tell you why. Because it had to be exact 90 degrees in 3 directions.

It had to be 90 degrees this way, 90 degrees this way, 90 degrees the other way. Perfect 90 degrees. Because if it's even 91 degrees, the whole building will be crooked.

If it is 91 degrees this way, the whole building will be crooked upwards. It had to be a perfect 90 degrees in all directions. That is the cornerstone, the perfect Jesus Christ.

And then in line, follow me as I follow Christ, Paul, Peter, John. They would be the foundation along with in their generation. But we read in Ephesians 4 that after Jesus went up to heaven, he again gave people apostles and prophets.

So throughout the centuries, God has given such ministries in the church to lay the foundation for the church. Many churches say they don't believe in it. Okay, God bless you.

Some people believe in this pyramid structure on top, general superintendent, country superintendent, area superintendent, district superintendent, pastor. The pyramid, the man on top. Or the Roman Catholic Church, priest, bishop, archbishop, cardinal, pope.

But that's not the New Testament pattern. The New Testament pattern is Christ the cornerstone, apostles and prophets, and then the church is built on top of that by the believers. So, when you look at the scriptures, you find that that is how the early church worked.

And Paul is given us as an example. And so Paul, what did he do? I believe every church was planted by the Lord, not by Paul. Paul went there and God planted a church and then he appointed elders.

That's one thing he did. And corrected them with constant letters of correction. All the letters which we read the epistles of correcting them, guiding them, visiting them again to see if they're going on okay.

And recommending Titus or Timothy to go there and encourage them so that they could have confidence that this man who's coming, Timothy, and Paul says accept him, accept Titus, he's a servant of the Lord. They had confidence in Paul, that's why they accepted Timothy and Titus. So you see the ministry of the church was like that and there were prophets and who preached long messages and encouraged people.

You read in Acts 15 that Judas and Silas were prophets who preached a long message and encouraged people. There were prophets there, there were apostles. And that is how the early church was built.

That's why Paul could say follow me as I follow Christ. So I see in the New Testament two examples. One is Jesus who says follow me and that's why I read the Gospels frequently to see new new areas, how I can follow Jesus in personal life, thought life, in attitude to various various things.

But when it comes to planting a church and appointing elders, Jesus doesn't show me by his life how to establish a church or correct a church or appoint elders or nothing. That I have to go to Paul. And so Paul also says follow me as I follow Christ.

So there I have an example for ministry. In Christ I have an example for every detail of my personal life and also the principles of ministry. But in actual building the church, I find the example is Paul who's told me how to do it.

For example, there was a man who was sleeping with his stepmother in sexual sin. Paul says I hand that man over to the devil for the destruction of the flesh so the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Wow, what authority that man had and what rebukes he could give to the church in Corinth.

But he would, you know in the second letter he says I wrote with much tears my first letter. It wasn't easy for me to write that letter. I wrote it with tears and by the time he writes the second letter the problem is solved.

That man repented and came back to the church. That was Paul's aim always that fellow will repent and come back. So I see in the New Testament these examples and that is the pattern for us to follow.

And I praise the Lord that God has given us all these ministries at different levels without anybody claiming to be an evangelist. We have got evangelists too also. There are some brothers who have got an amazing ability to bring other people to the church.

To bring them to Christ. They come to the church but they don't have the ability to build them up. So some shepherd is there in the church who can build them up.

And a church is safe when it has these ministries. And I have seen a lot of independent churches and these superstructure type of churches with a general superintendent or a pope. They all die, wither out.

A church must be a local church which has these ministries. Christ Jesus the cornerstone which means the perfect example in all directions but built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. But this great apostle John when he wrote Revelation.

You know what he calls himself in Revelation 1? He says I John your brother. Revelation 1.9 He doesn't call himself an apostle. They had no desire to call themselves apostles.

I am your brother. What about Peter? Peter in 1 Peter 5 says I am also a fellow elder. 1 Peter 5.1 He does not call himself an apostle.

Why did Paul call himself an apostle? Because in that new situation people were questioning. Original apostles I know whom Jesus chose. Who are you Paul? I am an apostle chosen by Jesus Christ.

Only to establish that what he was writing was scripture. That's why he had to call himself an apostle. Otherwise the apostles did not call themselves apostles.

They said we are brothers. That is the spirit of the New Covenant Church. We are all brothers.

We have different gifts like the hand, the eye, the ear. Different gifts. All are necessary.

And some hidden gifts. Liver, kidney, inside body, people who pray. All these ministries together build the body.

So I want to say to you brothers, please value, value highly those other brothers and sisters in your church. Maybe they only pray the great ministry. Don't think you are the only one who God can use.

If you try to do that you will build this pyramid type of structure which will be destroyed by God one day. Christ Jesus the cornerstone. Everybody must follow him.

And the apostolic and prophetic ministry and the shepherds and teachers of the church. Value these gifts. And fulfill the gift you have.

Whatever it is. And be humble enough to say I need the others. 1 Corinthians 12 says the hand cannot say to the leg I don't need you.

So brothers I think God has been very good to us in CFC through all these years and many of these things giving us amazing revelations on things which so many other people. It's all written in the Bible. We are not teaching anything outside the Bible in the New Testament.

But so many Christians, let me tell you honestly act as though all these things written in the New Testament are not important. That's not important. All this matter of foundation of apostles and prophets and prophesying No, no, no, it's not important.

Why in the world is the Holy Spirit wasting time writing all this? It's insulting the Holy Spirit. If your father wrote you a letter of 10 pages and you read 2 or 3 pages which you like and tear it up. No, no, that's not important.

You're insulting your father. And if I take some part of the New Testament and say No, no, no, that's not important. You're insulting your father in heaven.

He feels all of that is important for your personal life and to build your home and your church. So let's keep that in mind, dear brothers and sisters. Don't devalue any part of the New Testament.

That's why we study it, we value it and if you have a doubt about any of those things find out the answer from somewhere. There are a lot of books written on it. You can find out answers on almost many, many topics.

We have about 30 books in our CFC library itself and you can read answers to many of those things there. We have got in the CFC website there are 600 question answers. You can search for it and find an answer to almost any question you ask for.

So there are many resources God has given us in our day through which we can build a strong church wherever we are and be challenged ourselves to remain in humility. And one last thing I would say and that is from Luke chapter 5 Luke's Gospel chapter 5 verse 15. The news about Jesus was spreading even further.

Large crowds were gathering to hear Him, to be healed of their sicknesses. Amazing! Thousands were healed. What does Jesus do? He immediately slips away to the wilderness to pray.

Say, Lord you had to pray before the meeting, right? You had to pray before the meeting for the healings. What are you doing now? I am getting alone with my Father to give the glory to Him for what He did. Do you do that after you have preached? Do you do that after you have served God? Most Christians pray before they are going into a ministry.

And when that is accomplished praise the Lord! Indirectly you take credit yourself for what you have done. Lord thank you for helping me to preach today. Get into the habit of quickly giving the glory to God.

Don't touch the glory of God. It is a very dangerous thing. God will give us His power, His gifts.

But Isaiah 42 verse 8 says, My glory I will never give to another. Remember that verse Isaiah 42. My glory I will never give to another.

Don't touch the glory of God. Have you accomplished something in your church? Be quick to go before God and give Him the glory. Not just publicly saying, yes, yes it is God who did it and not me.

That is all honor seeking. You know when somebody comes to me after a meeting and says, oh brother Zach, I was so blessed by your ministry. I don't say, no, no, no give the glory to God.

Then I get more honor for my humility. I don't want that. That I can go quietly before God and tell Him, Lord I give you the glory.

I don't want this guy's honor for my humility. I say, yeah, thank you very much. I am glad you were blessed.

That is what I tell Him. It is so subtle. And humility and pride is most dangerous when it comes clothed with a dress of humility.

Did you understand that? Pride is most dangerous when it comes dressed in a dress of humility. Oh, not me brother. Thank you so much.

Bow your head and say, all garbage. There is so much of pride, rotten pride in us. Get alone before God and give the glory to Him frequently, frequently.

Begin your day with Jesus before you get out of bed. In bed, learn to give the glory to God for everything you accomplish. Make it a habit in your life.

I will tell you, God will bless you. You will live a healthy life. You will be able to accomplish God's purpose in your life.

May God bless you all. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, please remind us of the things that we need to hear again and again so that we can fulfill your purpose here on this earth.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/l7EQN0Q5O8Y.mp4>

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