

Things Unshakable - an Unshakable Church

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of building an unshakable church through obedience, discipleship, and a commitment to holiness over mere numbers.

Duration: 51:57

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 2:19

Topics: "Unshakable"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding God's ultimate purpose for believers, which is the church. He explains that the church is not just a physical building or a denomination, but a community of born-again believers brought together by Christ. The speaker highlights that Jesus himself is the builder of the church, and that the powers of darkness will never be able to overpower it. He also warns against compromising on sin and losing faith in the Bible and Christ, as these are ways in which the devil can prevail over churches. The sermon encourages believers to have a longing for their church to be built by Jesus according to his principles, so that it becomes an unshakable church.

Transcript

So this is the last in the series that I started last month on things unshakable. In a world where God has promised to shake everything, we thank God that we can have something that, some things that are unshakable and we considered first of all an unshakable life and then an unshakable home and today we want to consider an unshakable church. Many Christians are happy with an unshakable life.

It's a very selfish way to live. I just think of my own life and I'm okay and I don't worry about anybody else. I'm walking with the Lord and I'm having a deeper life with the Lord.

But that's not all there is to Christianity. Some people go one step higher and say I want a godly home. But even that can be self-centered where I think of just my family.

But God's purpose is ultimately to build a church where I'm connected to people who I'm not even related to physically and thus he demonstrates to the demons, to angels and to the world around his amazing wisdom. So if you want God's highest purpose, his highest, you must not stop with a godly life and a godly home. You have to move on to God's ultimate purpose and that is the church.

And when we speak of church we're talking about born-again believers who are brought together by Christ to be a family. Jesus used the word church for the first time in Matthew and chapter 16. Matthew 16 he used the word church for the first time in verse 18.

Matthew 16 and verse 18. And I say to you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell or Hades will not prevail against you. The gates of Hades speak of the powers of spiritual darkness.

The rock was the confession that Peter had just made the Christ the son of the living God and on that rock Jesus said he would build his church. So we see here that it is Jesus who builds his church. Through the years many men have built their own churches and churches are many people think of buildings and denominations but the church that Jesus is building is people.

And we need to understand what type of church Jesus is building because the church which he builds the powers of darkness will never be able to overpower it. So when we see so many churches today that have over which Satan has prevailed, they've lost their faith in the Bible, they've lost their faith in Christ, they've compromised on sin and allowed the world to come right in. These are the ways in which the devil has overpowered many churches.

Sin has become rampant. We can say that all those churches even they call themselves churches were not the church that Jesus built because Jesus said the church that I build the gates of hell the powers of darkness will never be able to overpower it. And that type of church is what we need to see Jesus building in many parts of the world and even right here.

We must have a longing if you're a part of a church if you're a member of a church your longing it must be part of your prayer. Lord I want you to make this a church that you built which the gates of hell the powers of darkness never have any power over. That's one mark of your loyalty to a church that you want Jesus to be the builder of that church according to the principles he has laid down in his word.

So that's what we want to look at. We looked at Matthew chapter 7 when we considered the unshakable life and unshakable home and I want to look at that again. In Matthew chapter 7 verse 24 he speaks about this man who built a house that could not be shaken.

We looked at that house first of all as a picture of our life which we are building and the home that we're building and now we want to look at that as a picture of the church we're building. That house is a picture of our life and our home and our church and how is this church built. He hears these words of mine and does them.

He builds his house on the rock and then verse 25 we could look at the rain descended that's the powers of spiritual darkness now coming and attacking this church and it says it burst against this house but it didn't fall because in this church they preached obedience to everything that Jesus commanded in Matthew 5, 6 and 7.

So that's the secret these words of mine go to verse 26 the foolish man Matthew 7, 26 and everyone who hears these words of mine who are the ones who hears the words of Jesus these are not the non-Christians these are not even those who never go to church never read the bible they don't hear his words these are people who go to church services read the bible they hear these words of mine the only thing is they don't do them they don't act upon them they are not taught in the church obedience and the

result is the powers of spiritual darkness the gates of hell prevail against it and the house collapses so we can say there are two types of churches those that seek to emphasize obedience to the commands of Jesus who build on an unshakable foundation and those who emphasize knowledge teaching

information without obedience and that is the house that collapses when we turn to the end of scripture in revelation chapter 18 and verse 2 revelation 18 verse 2 this house that collapses is called Babylon the house that fell the church that is built on a shaky foundation towards the end of scripture is called Babylon Babylon is not a particular denomination it's popular in some circles to relate it to some particular church and say you come out of that church you come out of Babylon it's not that easy if you come out of disobedience you come out of Babylon but you can sit in the best church in the world and if you just hear and don't obey you're building on Babylon still and one day it'll it's very clear Jesus said it so clearly you can hear and hear and hear and hear and accumulate

information in your head and you don't obey it one day this house will collapse whether it's a life or a home or a church Babylon has fallen Babylon is called in chapter 17 verse 5 Babylon the great mother of harlots harlot because it claimed to be the bride of Christ but fooled around with the world but Babylon is called a great a number of times in revelation it's a great church it's a big church it's a mega church whereas Jerusalem which is the house that stood is described in Revelation 21 verse 2 it's very interesting the Bible starts with two trees tree of knowledge of evil of good and evil and the tree of life and its end and the ultimate end of these two trees is two systems one is Babylon the other is Jerusalem and Jerusalem is described in chapter 21 verse 2 as a holy city

notice the difference Babylon is a great city and Jerusalem is a holy city now there are many many people who have been converted many millions the point is not numbers the point is quality is emphasized in Jerusalem whereas in Babylon it's numbers and size that is emphasized whenever a church or its members or its leaders get excited that more people are joining us and that's the thing that excites them you're on the road to building Babylon but when we're excited that the numbers that are joining us are growing in holiness and the ones who are here are growing in holiness then you're building Jerusalem it's not that God is against numbers the Bible says God wants everybody on earth to repent 2nd Peter 3 God so loved the whole world he gave his son to die for the whole world and that's

seven billion people and 2nd Timothy 2 says God wants every one of these seven billion people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth so it's God couldn't possibly be against numbers but if the standard is reduced so that it's no longer holiness and obedience to Christ that's emphasized then God's not interested in numbers when Noah gathered people together it says for 120 years he preached and he had only eight people if he had lowered the standard he could have got 8 000 or 80 000 but they'd have all perished he's called a preacher of righteousness and because he was a preacher of righteousness his church was pretty small Jesus said at the end of the sermon on the mount these amazing words Matthew chapter 7 and verse 14 I don't know how many Christians really believe this

Matthew chapter 7 verse 14 the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it do you really believe that that very few find the way to life there is a gate and there is a way he said that also at the end of the sermon on the mount the gate is forgiveness but then there's a way that leads to life that way is called a way of salvation of being free from sin being free from disobedience to God's word which characterizes the race of Adam which characterizes the world and it's very few who find this way many people hear about it but very few find it so I don't expect great numbers to be walking along this narrow way Jerusalem is not going to be as big as Babylon I'll tell you that Babylon is going to be

much bigger the church that Jesus builds will be

characterized not by size but by purity and holiness that's how it was in the early days and the other thing I want to mention is concerning Babylon and Jerusalem it's not just greatness and holiness what is it that makes Babylon great it's compromise in Revelation 17 we read of Babylon the harlot pictured as a woman and joining hands with the political system in the world symbolized by a beast and wherever the church gets involved in the political system and seeks to be seeks greatness through political systems and glories in its attachment to political leaders it's going to be Babylon whereas church seeks to speak from its pulpit only that which is politically correct and acceptable it's going to be Babylon whereas Jerusalem speaks the whole counsel of God the other thing you see about

Babylon in Revelation 18 is its close connection with the business world when money is a big factor in any church or mission organization or anything is going to end up in Babylon we need money for God's work but money must be a servant not a master where money becomes more important than the power of the Holy Spirit like in many many many Christian groups that's the road to Babylon in Revelation 18 we read that about the merchants of the earth weeping what is the principle of business give let me spend as little as I possibly can and gain for myself as much as I possibly can that's the principle on which every business in the world operates and when people come to church and say let me spend as little as I can of my energy and my resources and my money and let me gain as much as I can of

this world and personal benefits that is the road to Babylon it's the principle of business let me give as little to God as possible and get as much as from God as possible that's the road to Babylon and there are many Christians walking that way they come to church to give as little as possible and I'm not just talking about money and to get as much from God as possible that's not the way Jesus taught Jerusalem on the other hand is the city of sacrifice Babylon is a city of business Jerusalem is a city of sacrifice if you went to Jerusalem and walked into the temple the first thing you would see inside the temple is blood animals being slain every day blood blood blood every day sacrifice sacrifice sacrifice and the Lord was teaching his people that in a sin-cursed world that's the only

way by which we can live if we want to follow the Lord he demonstrated that on the on Calvary's hill when Jesus died God runs this world on the principle of sacrifice and a Christian who wants to follow Jesus will have to go the way of sacrifice and the way of sacrifice is the opposite of the business world let me give all that I can to God even if I get nothing in return now I believe that Christians sitting in every church and even this church could be divided into these two categories you come to church to give as little as you can of your time energy money anything to gain as much as you can you're going to be part of Babylon no matter how much theological information you get no matter how much accurate theological information you get on the other hand there could be those who come

here and say Lord you've already given everything for me on the cross I'm not asking for you for anything I've come to give myself to you first of all God wants your body not your money your body first of all present your bodies a living sacrifice to God and Lord I'm not coming to you to get any gain for myself certainly not material gain I'm coming here to give myself to you and it doesn't matter if I don't get anything in return that's the principle of sacrifice and those are the ones who will build Jerusalem now you get a if you get a church full of people like that boy I'll tell you the gates of hell will never prevail against that church the gates of hell see the devil's a businessman and the gates of hell will prevail against anyone who's got his principle of business which is give

as little as possible to God and gain as much as you can dear brothers and sisters if you want to get out of the devil's clutches get rid of that attitude and say Lord I want to give as much as I can for you and it doesn't matter if I don't get anything in return he'll do a lot for you so that's the way to go so in relation to the church that's going to be unshakable I want to speak on three things first of all discipleship the type of people who constitute this church and secondly fellowship the relationship between people who constitute this church and third leadership the type of leaders who can build such a church so those are the three things I want to share now I want you to turn first of all to mark 16 and verse 15 mark 16 verse 15 where Jesus called what gave what is known as the

great commission go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation or to all people that's what we normally what we commonly call evangelism where and I praise God for all those who have gone throughout through the years as missionaries as evangelists sometimes a tremendous sacrifice and all the means that have been employed people have spent millions of dollars to spread the gospel through literature radio to reach out to the poor to many different countries to those who've never heard about Jesus this is called evangelism and it's a very very important ministry but what are we supposed to do once we have preached the gospel to every creature the next thing we are told in Matthew 28 is see this is the other side of the great commission and verse 19 go and make disciples in

every nation Matthew 28 verse 19 so we are to preach the gospel and then we are to make them disciples now that's a lot more than just asking them to sign a decision card or asking them to come to the front or raise their hand or pray the sinner's prayer it's a lot more than that when Jesus said go and make disciples they understood that what that meant the disciple is a learner and a follower make people who will learn from me and follow me follow my example that's what Jesus meant and also he laid down the conditions of discipleship in Luke 14 very clearly in verses 26 to 33 first of all in Luke 14 26 the three conditions of discipleship that Jesus laid down so that he spelled it out before his apostles so that they knew what they were supposed to do when they went to every nation on

the face of the earth whichever nation you're in I live in India and God called me to make disciples there and if I am to know what a disciple is I'm going to look at Luke 14 and verse 26 to 33 first of all to love Jesus in a nutshell what this verse means is to love Jesus more than everybody else on earth that's the meaning our love for Jesus was must be so great that love for others is like a drop in the bucket almost like hatred in other words if it's Jesus and my parents I'm going to do what Jesus tells me if Jesus is my wife or children I'm going to do what Jesus tells me I love him more than everyone else a lot of Christians have problems in their life because they do not obey the first commandment and you have a lot of problems in your life it's something like a child trying to

study science and geography and history without learning the ABC now when the child goes to kindergarten the first thing they're taught is ABC to learn how to read because everything else in education is dependent on being able to read and let me tell you the first commandment the kindergarten lesson in the Christian life is what Jesus said love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength and all your soul and all your mind if you get your ABC right you'll be able to understand all the other things in the Christian life the trouble with a lot of Christians why they have difficulty in their Christian life is they jumped up to grade four or five without studying ABC love Jesus with all your heart this is not a sort of a torture that God gives us he's this is the way of

health to love Jesus with our whole being is like being healthy throughout my body is anybody scared of that being healthy throughout the body to love Jesus with all my heart so that he's more important to me

and my devotion to him is more than to anybody in this world I want to please him more than I want to please anybody in this world that's number one condition I've got to go and make people love Jesus more than anyone else in the world every person who comes forward in an evangelistic meeting or assigns a decision card or wants to be a member in my church I have to teach him how to love Jesus more than every other human being now if I don't do that I'm not fulfilling the great commission and then I'm going to build a shaky church he's going to have problems all the time the second

condition of discipleship is verse 27 if he doesn't carry his own cross not the cross of Jesus I don't have to carry his cross he took his cross and died on it I've got to carry my cross you've got to carry yours if he doesn't carry his own cross and come after me he cannot be my disciple the cross is the cross on Jesus the cross which Jesus took he died and the cross I take I have to die that's a very simple meaning that means I get out of the way and let Jesus rule my life self is crucified in other words I've got to love Jesus more than I love myself if I love Jesus more than I love myself I won't get offended with people I won't get upset I won't have my own ambitions anymore I'll have what Jesus wants me to do I will not love my reputation my prayer will be hallowed be thy name Lord

not hallowed be my name I couldn't care less what people say about my name a lot of things happen when we love Jesus more than ourselves you know that all these petty fights that husband and wife have with each other is all because they don't love Jesus more than themselves it's because we love ourselves that we get hurt when somebody said something or does something or doesn't do something we love Jesus supremely and say self is crucified many problems are solved and now think of this everywhere I go when a person responds to the call of Christ I have to teach him now you've got to love Jesus more than yourself every married couple I've got to teach them when they're conducting their marriage you've got to love Jesus more than each other more than yourself how much is this being done no

wonder we have so many shaky churches no wonder we have so many churches over which the devil is prevailing we're not doing what Jesus told us to do we're trying to build churches with third-rate material no wonder the whole building collapses the third condition Luke 14 verse 33 in all these conditions you see he cannot he cannot be my disciple I mean there's no such thing as a second-class disciple there's only a disciple or no disciple notice that in all these conditions Luke 14 33 so none of you can be my disciple who doesn't give up all his possessions on the important word that is possessions possessions are things that possess us things that we grab on to hold on to say that's mine I'm not going to let anybody take it it's not that God doesn't want us to have things we can have

them but not possess them Jesus had an inner robe that was so expensive that the soldiers didn't even want to tear it at the cross but he never possessed anything he had things but he never possessed them and that's the way a Christian is to live say Lord everything I have is yours I hold them yeah they're mine my house my car whatever it is but I hold them in an open palm as recognize the they're yours I have them but I don't possess them in other words I love Jesus more than anything material on this earth so basically these are the three conditions of discipleship and this person whom I bring to Christ I have to teach him now to love Jesus more than his job more than his money more than his bank account more than his stocks and shares and everything else and say Lord I love you

everything else is unimportant for me if the share market goes down and you go down with it well you don't love Jesus really I mean if Jesus is more important than you and everything else I say Lord you take care of everything for me I will trust you and I tell you something people like that they overcome so many problems in their life many financial difficulties people have are because they have pursued the road of

covetousness and possession and more and more and more always not satisfied with what they have then you reap what you sow but if you love Jesus more than everything many many problems are solved David said in Psalm 37 verse 25 Psalm 37 and verse 25 he said I've I was a young man and now I'm an old man he probably wrote that when he was 68 or 69 I have never seen a righteous

man forsaken till today I've never seen his descendants that means your children and your grandchildren begging for bread what's the what's the way to that life be righteous put Jesus above everything else in your life God says those who honor me I will honor and if you honored God and he doesn't honor you you'll be the first person in man's history whom God didn't honor it won't happen so that's the way of discipleship and that's the type of church that Jesus wants us to build now we go to the second point these disciples when you come bring them together you first taught them to love Jesus with all their heart but even then they can be a selfishness in their life if they are not taught to work together and live together with others I never knew what a selfish man I was till I got

married because when we are single you know we have a difficulty with somebody we can retreat from them and retreat into our room but when you get married and you retreat into your room there's somebody else there in that room who's living with you whom you can't retreat from and then you discover what a selfish person you are and I'm very thankful I'd recommend all single people get married if God leads you that way but if God doesn't lead you to marriage you can find out your selfishness even with living with other people in the church or fellowshiping with them you discover how you want your way you get offended when you don't have your way it's in relationship with others that we discover that if I live all by myself in a desert I won't discover how selfish I am God puts us together

with others in a church and there it says iron sharpens iron that's how it is in the church you know it's like two rough stones that rub together and both become smooth that's how God puts us together with difficult people and it's imperfect people everybody in the church is imperfect God puts imperfect people together but as they work together and live together and bear with one another they both become perfect God has put us in fellowship with one another he's not building holy individuals Jesus has didn't come into the world to save souls or to win souls like it's commonly said he came to build the church the apostle Paul didn't go around saving souls he brought people to Christ and put them together in a local church that's what he did in every place God doesn't want you to be just a

saved soul wandering around he wants you to be part of a local church he wants your family to be part of a local church a fellowship of people and the reason why we're hesitant to be that is because it will expose our selfishness and yet Jesus said I will build a church he's not building individuals he's not even building homes all this ultimately is to lead to build a church a group of people who are different from one another just like these two hands are different from each other not only different complete opposites here my thumb is on the right side and here my thumb is on the left side have you ever seen two complete opposites like this and yet God put them together in one body and they work together not because they're always hanging around with each other but because they're all

connected to the head have you seen a person playing the piano or an organ how nimbly those fingers move and how fast it's because each of these are connected to the head and that's how their fellowship is perfect but if their fellowship with the head is broken like in a paralyzed hand well that can't cooperate with the other hand anymore that's what happened to Adam and Eve their connection with God was gone and then a connection with each other is gone remember whenever there's conflict between you and your wife or you and your husband or you and another brother always the problem is first vertical your connection

with God is gone that's why this other problem other people may trouble you but it won't disturb your relationship with God if you keep that vertical relationship right so if

there is a proper connection with the head between two believers in the body they will work together there will be I mean they may have to bear with one another of course because we're imperfect but God wants us to become one this is one of the great mysteries of the new covenant it was not possible in the old testament in the old testament God could not make two people one this is something even Jesus could not do during his entire earthly life on the last day the last supper those 11 people who had been with him for so many years heard the world's greatest preacher for three and a half years walked with the world's holiest man for three and a half years could not become one with each other they were fighting for leadership and Jesus told them I've got to go it's better for you that I go

because when I go the holy spirit will come and then you will do something which even I was not able to do you will do something greater than what I've done John 14 12 you will become one with each other and that is one of the great blessings of Pentecost where it says by one spirit we were baptized or immersed into one body have you recognized that many who claim to be filled with the holy spirit are still living individualistic lives that's not God's will baptized into one body the holy spirit if you say you're filled with the holy spirit it must be he must have united you with other members of the body whom also he filled with the spirit you cannot live an individualistic life if you're filled with the holy spirit it's a deception that's why there's a lot of counterfeit in this realm of

the spirit's fullness wherever there's a genuine fullness of the spirit it'll bring you in fellowship with other believers who are as imperfect as you are but who are also filled with the spirit and you work together with them you fellowship with them that's why as I said in the old testament there were these great individual prophets who did a fantastic thing like Elijah Jeremiah Isaiah nobody can question their ministry or John the Baptist the greatest of all men who was ever born and then Jesus came and he started something completely new he always sent his disciples two by two and even the great missionary movement that started in acts 13 the holy spirit said separate me Saul and Barnabas not all white one person alone just two people and if you look at the lives of Saul and Barnabas

they were so completely dissimilar to each other and God brought them together for a ministry I found this in many places as we've established churches in different parts of India God brings into leadership people who are dissimilar so they can be a balance just like the left hand and the right hand opposites but be able to work together Paul and Barnabas Jesus said with two are gathered together in my name I'm in the midst he's not in the midst there's only one there's no midst there for a midst there must be at least two how do you get Jesus in the midst if you're all by yourself you know I mentioned that when we study the home that's why the devil tries to divide husband and wife it's when they are one that Jesus in the midst it's when you are one with another brother that you're in

the midst if you can bear with that person Romans 14 speaks about permitting people to have different views on a whole lot of peripheral doctrines if you are united to Christ we don't all have to agree on different different issues whether we hold the same view or not we are united in our loyalty to Christ where two or three are gathered together like that Jesus said if two are agreed Matthew 18 19 and then where two or three are gathered together like that one in spirit even though in their mind they may not be completely agreed one in their spirit I want to show you Ephesians there are two verses in Ephesians which when you put together you understand this in Ephesians 4 it says in verse 3 Ephesians 4 3 we must be diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace be

diligent that means work very hard to preserve the unity of the spirit there's a unity of the spirit now you combine that with Ephesians 4 and verse 13 where it says until we attain to the unity of the faith what do you get when you put these two verses together preserve the unity of the spirit until we attain to the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the son of God to a mature man to the fullness of Christ that's when Christ comes our minds are going to agree with each other a hundred percent when Christ comes but until then we've got to preserve the unity of the spirit the unity that the Holy Spirit brings us because we are devoted to Jesus Christ he doesn't mean that you and I have to hold the same view on everything you know in the early church people had different views on

the sabbath the Jewish people had been celebrating the sabbath every week for 30 years and all of a sudden they get converted it's very difficult for such people to get rid of their sabbath habits and Paul said okay keep it but don't force these gentiles to do it and he told the gentiles don't compel us Jews to give up their sabbath they don't want to keep it that's fine it's up to them let there be a little amount of give and take in this because this is not fundamental to our faith in Christ or some person does not eat meat offered to idols that the gentiles were always eating meat that all the meat was offered to idols and they when they became Christians they said oh we won't touch that but some others said hey what's an idol it's just a block of wood we just pray and we eat it and

says and so Paul said listen the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking make allowance for each other so often Christians get divided on silly issues of small little petty points that's where we need to hear that word preserve the unity of the spirit and until we reach the unity of the faith is this such a big issue that we have to allow the devil to come and divide us on it no preserve the unity of the spirit until we attain the unity of the faith because we're supposed to be a body the body of Christ and just like our human body has different functions some are more prominent think of this tongue which is speaking speaking speaking it could say symbolize one who's got a ministry of teaching or preaching who's in the pulpit but the tongue cannot fulfill that

ministry if there is not a hidden part of the body called the heart it's always pumping the blood you know what the heart is in the Christian life those who pray who are never seen whoever who've got a special gift from God I really believe God gives some people who have no gift of speaking a tremendous ability to pray in secret and who support the tongue speaking I've often felt standing in a pulpit that I'm the tongue speaking and everybody sees me and they think it's me it's not me there's someone else behind me a lot of people who are pumping the blood praying pray pray I keep on asking people to pray for me just like Paul you know Paul said pray for me that I'll preach the word of God boldly and we would think Paul does he need boldness the I need to pray for him yes he needs prayer

support he needs the heart pumping and I really appreciate those who pray for me I've often told people listen if God ever reminds you of my name will you take 15 seconds just to pray that God will give me a right word and challenge people to follow Jesus wherever in the world I happen to be at that time that's all you got to do can you spend 15 seconds whenever God puts my name in your head whenever he does that it makes a tremendous difference I know standing in many pulpits in many many places I know the difference it makes when people are praying for me it's a world of difference so don't think that because your ministry is hidden you're not a part of the body you're a very important part of the body but preserve the unity of the spirit don't try to be like somebody else if you have

the heart don't try to speak that's not your calling but pump the blood keep pumping it one day you'll get your reward you probably get a greater reward than the tongue gets so be faithful you're a part of the body

if you've given your life to Christ you're a disciple you are a part of the body and you have a ministry you just got to discover it it may not be prominent it's a sad thing that Christians are always looking for a prominent ministry do you know that the most important parts of your body are inside your body not even visible and you wouldn't be able to survive you can survive without some of these visible parts but inside there are many many important parts of course if you don't do your function I'm not saying that God's the body of Christ will die God will just give that

ministry to somebody else and you'll miss the opportunity Jesus called Judas Iscariot to fulfill a certain function he failed and he called Paul that's my understanding he called Paul to do that ministry so if you fail no one is indispensable I mean Judas Iscariot was probably the cleverest of the disciples and he must have thought boy I'm so important here nobody's important nobody is indispensable in the body of Christ I remember years ago reading a little poem which I wrote down and read very frequently it said if ever you think you're indispensable to the body of Christ get a bucket of water put your hand right inside and when you pull it out the hole that's left behind is how much you'll be missed when you're gone I said great Lord I want to remember that I put my hand in a bucket of

water and pull it out in the hole that's there's all that's gonna be how much I missed God's work went on in this world for thousands of years before you and I arrived on the scene and it'll continue long after you and I are gone nobody is indispensable to God's work and let no one ever think so if one man fails God will use another that's all if one woman fails God will use another if Judas Iscariot fails God has a Paul if Paul failed then God will choose somebody else it's always like that but God wants us to do our part and the third thing I want to say is concerning leadership just like in society God is appointed it says in Romans 13 those in authority and in a family God has placed father and mother to be in authority in a family the church by the way is not a school room classroom

it's not a school it's a family in a school in a classroom the important person is the teacher he teaches and he may be a scholar he may be a great teacher but he doesn't have a personal relationship with those students like a father has a good father I'm talking about a good father and mother a school teacher teaches and the students go away he collects his salary and goes home but a father and mother they work entirely differently and many churches are like classrooms with a great teacher up there and everybody getting instructed and then they go home the teacher collects his salary and goes away but that's not the church that's going to remain that's such a church will collapse it's the church that's built as a family now I say that because that's what we've tried to do in India for 35

years now 35 years ago some of us got a bit sick and tired of the dead Christendom that we were in and four families we got together in my home and started meeting together as a house church and that's how we started we said we're going to preach discipleship I want to preach the Sermon on the Mount because Jesus said those who do what I said in the Sermon on the Mount that forgive everybody love your enemies and do things as unto God and not unto men be merciful be pure in heart don't lust with your eyes and overcome anger and all these things listed there speak the truth always we kept on preaching that and the conditions of discipleship and we said it doesn't matter if we don't grow much in size we want to be disciples and we grew as a family committed to one another and like that God

multiplied us and now we have 40 50 churches planted around different places but we never were interested in numbers never not today not then we said we want to grow as a family and I work with 70 80 elders who are leaders in all these churches and I tell them dear brothers you must be a father to your congregation you must look at those people as your children whom you care for a real loving father don't

ever exploit them the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 2 look at this wonderful verse 2nd Corinthians 7 verse 2 this is the mark of a true leader he can say to his congregation we have wronged nobody we have corrupted nobody we took advantage of nobody that's the mark of a godly man a godly leader we took a wrong nobody we corrupted nobody we

took advantage of nobody I believe God needs many leaders like that and when a church grows to a large size like this you can't depend on one or two leaders you need many leaders at different levels who will never take advantage of others never corrupted others and never wrong others who are fathers real loving fathers who are not teachers working for any personal gain or benefit or honor so this is what I share with my fellow elders be one of those who can have this testimony when you have ended your ministry that you can stand before your church I mean I can today stand before my church in Bangalore for 35 years and say to them dear brothers I have wronged none of you I've never corrupted you have never taken advantage of you and I believe it's possible for many many people sitting here

to grow up to be godly men and women like that God wants such people who have the spirit of a father who are not seeking to get something for themselves just like you want your children to grow up to maturity who want people in the church to grow up to maturity and like a father would be a strict doorkeeper not to allow corrupt influences to come into the his home that would ruin his children a true spiritual leader would be very careful not to let corrupt influences come in and destroy the church he will not seek for popularity but for purity so this is what I share with our own leaders and then I also tell them you have to be careful because when you're a leader it's a tremendous privilege a tremendous honor to be a leader of God's people but it's a tremendous and awesome responsibility

because to whom more is given more will be required it says in James chapter 3 and verse 1 teachers James chapter 3 verse 1 teachers will be judged with a stricter judgment I know that I have no doubt in my mind that I will be judged by a much higher standard by God than all the people I preach to much more than even my fellow elders because they look up to me it's it's an awesome responsibility to be an elder or leader but we must always live in fear and we have an example of this in the Old Testament in the book of Numbers in chapter 14 this is a very interesting passage that's always brought a healthy fear of God in my own life in Numbers 14 and verse 22 Numbers 14 22 we read of the children of Israel the Lord telling them these 10 times the last part of that verse you have not

listened to my voice and so verse 23 you will not enter the land of Canaan he gave them nine chances they were rebelled he forgave they rebelled he forgave they rebelled he forgave the tenth time he said that's it you are not going to enter the land 600,000 of you will all perish in the wilderness except the two who trusted me now I want you to see another example in Numbers chapter 20 this is a man who had been faithful for 40 years Moses one day God told Moses in verse 8 Numbers 20 verse 8 when the people were asking for water go and take your rod and speak to the rock you remember Moses last time 40 years ago I asked you to hit the rock this time you don't hit it just speak to it because Christ is crucified only once he's not to be crucified a second time but Moses got so upset in

verse 11 Moses verse 11 he says he took the rod and struck the rock twice verse 11 and of course the water flowed proving that even when a servant of God disobeys God still blesses two million people got water two million people got blessed and Moses could have thought well I disobeyed God but God still blessing two million people that doesn't mean God was happy with you it just means God loves those two million people that's all it proved nothing else in the next verse you read the Lord said to Moses because you didn't believe me because you didn't obey me you will not enter the land did he give him nine chances

no did he give him even one chance no zero chances you failed once you're out Moses can you think of the disappointment it came to him he who had looked forward to entering the

promised land for 40 years God is a very loving father but he's a strict God it's an awesome responsibility to be a leader we have to live in fear and trembling before him but it's a tremendous privilege and I believe that God wants such people let me say one last thing in the Old Testament there was a tabernacle that was built exactly according to the pattern God gave Moses but the most important thing in that tabernacle was not the pattern it was the fire on the altar the presence of God and if we want the presence of God we read in Exodus chapter 39 and 40 about 18 times it comes Moses did exactly as the Lord commanded and the pillar of cloud and fire came there now I want to say to you that is a picture of the church if we do exactly as the Bible has taught we will have the presence

of Jesus in our midst in every single service we love the power of the Holy Spirit in our church and I believe even in this church it can be so if we will say Lord I want you to build this church on a rock that will not shake so that the powers of darkness will never be able to prevail against this church may it be so let us pray

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