

The Authority of Christ in the Church

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual authority in the church, which is obtained through the breaking of one's will and the denial of self, allowing God to have control over one's life.

Duration: 54:55

Scripture: Matthew 18:19-20, Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 4:3, Ephesians 6:12, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Authority"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and sacrificial love within the church, highlighting the need for spiritual authority over Satan. It stresses the significance of maintaining a clear conscience, walking in humility, and avoiding gossip to preserve unity and authority over the enemy. The speaker encourages believers to seek fellowship in churches that resemble the New Testament model, functioning as families with sacrificial love and a focus on building symphonies of unity and faith.

Transcript

The body of Christ, the church is the body of Jesus Christ and the reason why the church is called the body of Christ is because we're supposed to carry on the same ministry that Jesus fulfilled in his physical body here on earth. And it's just continuing to do the same thing and we can expect to face the same reproach and ridicule that he faced. Sometimes we wonder if God is almighty why doesn't he protect us from so many things? Well, he didn't protect Jesus from ridicule, from being mocked at, from being spat, from being crucified.

That was God's way to manifest his glory and his wisdom. I want to speak about one aspect finally in this last session and that is concerning spiritual authority. I was saying, mentioning earlier that God never commits spiritual authority to an unbroken man.

And what I mean by brokenness is different from being crushed. God never crushes our personality and you should never crush the personality of your children. Never.

But their will needs to be broken. As a child grows up that strong stubborn will, self-will that he's inherited from Adam, if you don't break that you're going to have a real problem and that child is a teenager or when he grows up. So that will needs to be broken without crushing his personality and that's what a wise father does.

We've all inherited this strong self-will is the cause of all of our problems and that is the root to which the Lord is laying the axe. So that's what I mean by brokenness. God never crushes us, but he has to break us.

You remember once Jesus said that he's like a rock. If you fall on it you'll be broken. But if you refuse to fall on it, then the rock will fall on you and crush you and that's the unbeliever.

God doesn't do that. We fall on the rock and we're broken and say Lord I want my will to be broken. I don't know whether you realize this that when you break bread and take part in what you call the communion, this is what we are testifying to really.

Lord Jesus, why did you go to the cross? I mean you could have escaped it in Gethsemane, but in Gethsemane you said not my will, but thine be done father. Your will was broken and that's why your body was broken. And now Lord, I am participating in that bread to say that I also want my will to be broken like yours.

If you don't mean that, it's meaningless. I remember for many years I took part in the Lord's table like a ritual. It was meaningless to me.

It's like a lot of people who take child baptism. It's a ritual and those of us who took baptism the right way, we took it because we wanted to mean something. I've died to my old life and risen again.

But many who have understood baptism and never understood the Lord's table was, I'm saying Lord, I want to share in your in your death to self. And if I don't mean that, then I shouldn't take part in it. See if all I do is admire Jesus.

Oh, what a wonderful life you lived on earth. Then I tell people in our church, when the bread comes to you in a plate, you just say, oh what wonderful bread. Okay and pass it on to the next person.

And he says what wonderful bread and pass it on. Don't take part in it because you have no interest in allowing your will to be broken. But when I take part in it, I say I want to be broken.

I want my will to be, I want to deny my will where it conflicts with God's will. You know, it's only where it conflicts with God's will that I have to deny my will. It's like the cross, you know, where my will conflicts with God's will, I got to die.

That's the meaning of taking up the cross every day. That means where I come into a situation where I know God wants me to do this and my inclination is to do this. Somebody speaks to me in a certain way and my inclination is to retort and reply to him in the same tone and God says keep your mouth shut.

And I deny my will. And that's taking up the cross and we get lots of opportunities like that throughout the day. And that to such a person God wants to commit spiritual authority.

Jesus was, his will was broken through numerous circumstances in 30 years. When he wanted to do something, maybe his mother told him to do something else. And you know how it is for a child.

Jesus grew up like us and how, if you have children, you know how difficult it is for them sometimes to obey because they have to deny themselves and they don't want to do that. And think of a child, Jesus grew up every single day for 30 years. He denied himself.

I believe that is the greatest miracle Jesus did in his life. That he denied himself every single situation for 30 years always to do the Father's will. And therefore God gave him such tremendous spiritual authority.

The body of Christ had authority and it was not authority over men. He was a servant of men. The last day of his earthly life is washing people's feet.

He was a servant right up till the end. He didn't get promoted to become a director or something. He was down at the Lord's feet, at the feet, sorry, the feet of his disciples on the last day.

And this is where we must be found. This is what I've always prayed, Lord, the last day of my earthly life. I want to be found at the feet of your disciples washing them.

And nothing else. I don't want a title or position or honor or any such thing. If I can be found washing the feet of the disciples on my last day on earth, I've gone the way Jesus went.

But authority is over sin and over the forces of evil, particularly Satan. See, in the Old Testament, there was no such thing as conflict with Satan. You never read in all of the Old Testament anybody fighting with Satan.

Never. I mean the closest you see to it is in the book of Daniel where he has a vision of Michael the archangel fighting with some demons and the demons of Persia or something like that. But you never find, not even the great prophets, the great men of God in the Old Testament, their fight was always with human beings.

They fought the Philistines and the Amorites and the Syrians and Egyptians and all types of people. It was always human beings. But the moment you come to the New Testament, you find Jesus.

He never fights with human beings. Never. If they spit on him or call him the devil, he's just forgiven.

He was never interested in fighting with human beings. But he fought with the devil and was always overcome. And at the end of his life, he said these words in John 14 and verse 30.

See, the Holy Spirit shows us the glory of Jesus. This is what we've been trying to see in our life these days. John 14 and verse 30.

The last part of that verse, he says, the ruler of this world, the devil, comes but he's got nothing in me. For 33 years, 33 and a half years, the devil had tried to get in something, get a foothold in Jesus' life. But he didn't succeed.

And he said, the ruler of the world is coming even now. But he's got nothing in me. Absolutely nothing.

He's got no foothold in me. He could never make me proud. He could never make me covetous.

He could never make me lust. He could never make me bow down to him in any way for anything that he offered me. In every single situation, I wanted to please my father.

He has nothing in me. This is the body of Christ on the last day of his earthly life. And I see that as a church of Jesus Christ, which is his body, this is the position we should have too.

And the leaders in a church need to take the leadership in this. That when Satan comes against the body of Christ, he finds nothing there of his spirit. It's no use being a big church if the devil's got a foothold here

and there.

I'd rather have a small church where the devil's got no foothold, which can accomplish God's purpose. In that town or city or in that country. So this matter of authority over Satan is something distinctively new covenant.

And you see that Jesus said that in Luke chapter 10. He said these words in verse 19 to his disciples. Luke 10 19.

I've given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall injure you. That's a great promise. Satan has got power.

There's no doubt about it. He's got tremendous power. And you can see the havoc he has wrought with that power across the earth.

But what the Lord gives us over Satan is not greater power than him, but authority. Satan has got power to do a lot of things that we don't have power to do. Satan could bring fire down from heaven.

He can do all types of things. That is power. But what we have is authority.

Authority is different from power. In India, one of the illustrations I use of this is, you know, many road crossings, we don't have traffic lights, particularly in the smaller towns and all. But you'll have a policeman who's standing on a little platform there in the middle of the road and he is the one who holds up his hand to stop or let people go.

And this is how it was in countries before traffic lights came in. And here are these huge trucks with tremendous power coming down the road and this small little policeman just lifts up his hand and it stops. He doesn't have more power than those trucks.

They can run him down any time. But he's got the authority of the government behind him. When he lifts up his hand, that truck better stop.

That's the difference in authority and power. And the Lord says here, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy. Okay, that truck may have more power than the policeman, but he can stop it.

He can stop ten trucks. They'll all stop. And so that is the authority the Lord gives us over Satan.

And it's very important that Christians recognize that in their life, in their home, and in the church. Authority over Satan. You must not allow Satan to come into your life or your home or your church.

These are the three areas. I must not, the prince of the world comes, he finds nothing in my life that you know, corresponds to his nature and he tries to enter my home. I've got authority to drive him right out.

He's got no place, no foothold in my home. He can't touch my children. I've got authority over that.

And he can't, if you're a good leader in a church, he can't have, he cannot, you know, have authority over your church. He may infiltrate your church with hypocrites and schemers. He infiltrated Jesus' church.

Jesus' church had 12 people and Satan infiltrated it with one who was possessed not by demons, but by the devil himself. It says Satan entered into Judas Iscariot. He was a devil.

Jesus called him a devil long before he betrayed him. But he was sitting in, there was a devil sitting in Jesus' church. But he couldn't influence that church.

That's the thing. He couldn't corrupt one of those people. So I'm not disturbed if some hypocrites or people who are insincere come and sit in our church.

They'll always be the backbenchers. They'll never get power in our church. The sad thing is in many churches, we may say, yeah, every church has got hypocrites.

That's right. We've got hypocrites in our church too. But the difference is this, those hypocrites don't get power in our church.

In a lot of other churches, the hypocrites are in the pulpit. And that's not the place where the hypocrites should be. They should be in the backbench and recognize that they've got no power in that church.

So it's, every church has got hypocrites, but Judas Iscariot never got any position. I mean, okay, let him take care of the money. That's all right, but he's not going to have any spiritual position in that church.

It's very important that a church must have spiritual authority over Satan. And just like Satan tried to attack Jesus, he tried to attack his church. Through Judas Iscariot, he didn't succeed.

And this is the position of triumph that every church must be in. A lot of that depends on the unity there is in the eldership. This is what I want to say.

In a home, that spiritual authority depends on the unity between husband and wife. I'll show you that from Scripture. In Matthew chapter 16, I'm sorry, Matthew 18, Jesus speaks about authority in verse 18, about binding something on earth.

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. It's a verse which a lot of people don't understand, Matthew 18, verse 18. What are you supposed to bind on earth which will be bound in heaven? Whatever you lose on earth will be lost in heaven.

You know, the Bible speaks about three heavens. In the Psalms, it says, when I see the heavens, the work of your hands. That's the first heaven, what we call space, the universe.

In the Psalms, that's called heaven. That's the first heaven. And then in 2nd Corinthians 12, Paul says, I was caught up to paradise, to the third heaven, where God was there.

So this is the first heaven, and that's the third heaven. So in between, there must be a second heaven. And that is where the devil is.

You know, a lot of people think the devil is in hell. That's because they haven't read the Bible. The devil is not in hell, by the way.

You read in the book of Job, God asked Satan, where are you coming from? He says, I've been roaming around on the earth. He's still roaming around on the earth after all these thousands of years, and particularly looking at the lives of believers. Because he's called the accuser of the brethren in Revelation 12 10.

He's not the accuser of unbelievers. They're already in his grasp and in his hand. He doesn't have to accuse them.

But he goes around examining believers and trying to find out how he can find something in them to accuse them to God. And I'll tell you something, he never tells lies to God. For example, he can't go and tell God, you know, Zach murdered somebody the other day.

You know, he can't tell a lie to God because God knows it's not true. He wouldn't dare to tell a lie to God. He tells lies to us.

Like he told Eve, you won't die if you eat this fruit. He tells a lot of lies to human beings, but he never tells a lie to God. And what we learn from that is that how do you know whether you have a spirit of the accuser in you? When you speak about somebody in an accusative way, even if it is the truth, you could have the spirit of the accuser.

Because Satan speaks the truth to God, and he's an accuser. It's a spirit in which it is spoken. It's meant to tear the person down.

Jesus Christ never accuses. He convicts in order to lift a person up. Here's a person who's fallen down, and the devil would accuse him.

See what he's done. See, look at his condition now. Whereas Jesus says, I know.

I'm not an accuser. I'm an advocate. I want to lift him up.

That's the difference. And all of us, whether we know it or not, are unconsciously cooperating with Satan or cooperating with Jesus. The Bible says Satan accuses people day and night, and Jesus intercedes for them all the time.

We read in Hebrews 7 25, he ever lives to intercede for us. There are two ministries going on in the heavens. One is the ministry of accusation.

Look what that brother did, and look what that sister did, look at this, look at this, and won't lift one finger to help. That's the devil. And the other is praying, Lord, is there something I can do to help that fallen person? And I want to say to all of you that we are all, either engaged in one of these two ministries or doing nothing.

And Jesus said, if you don't gather with me, you are scattering, whether you know it or not. Whether you know it or not, if you're not gathering with Jesus, you're scattering. So that's just in passing.

But here, in the second heaven, that's when the devil, when Satan, when Lucifer became the devil through pride and rebellion, he was cast out of the third heaven, and he was sent down to the second heaven. And we read in Revelation 12, one day he'll be cast down to the earth, and he'll be here for three and a half years. And then from there, he'll be cast into the bottomless pit.

And then after a thousand years, he'll be pulled out from there, and cast into the lake of fire, where hell will also be cast. So in a sense, strictly speaking, the devil never goes to hell. He goes from third heaven to second heaven, to earth, to the bottomless pit, and into the lake of fire, finally.

So, but right now, he's in the second heaven. And that's why it says in Ephesians 6 and verse 12, that we don't wrestle with flesh and blood. We wrestle with principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

Which heavenlies? He's not in the third heaven. He's in the second heaven. And there are these forces.

So when it speaks here about binding something on earth, which will be bound in heaven, it's referring to the second heaven. We don't have to bind anything in the third heaven, in God's presence. Everything is free there.

There's liberty there. But in the second heaven, there are demons and the devil, who try to come down to earth, into your home, to bring confusion between you and your wife, or you and your husband, to bring confusion to your children, to do all types of things. And the devil's always trying to mess up people's lives.

You know, when he whispers something into your ear against your wife, you can be pretty sure he's whispering something in your wife's ear as well, against you. So that there's a little tension. So there's a little misunderstanding.

And the devil's active in so many homes, in so many churches. All the splits and divisions that come through self-seeking elders, and people seeking their own, and seeking their own honor. It's all the devil's work in so many churches.

I'm not talking of all divisions. I think in some cases people pull out because the church is corrupt. And that's not the devil, that's God.

Like in the very beginning of the Bible, you read that God separated the light from the darkness. That type of separation is from God. But a lot of splits and churches and divisions are because of people seeking their own.

So the devil's always working. And there needs to be people who have spiritual authority over Satan, who can bind those activities of Satan. You can't bind Satan himself.

No, you can't bind the demons. Even Jesus did not cast the demons into the bottomless pit. He sent them into the pigs once, or he cast them out.

We cannot bind Satan, but we can bind his activities in your home or in your church. And if you bind it, they'll be bound up there. I mean their authority that's exercised from Satanic headquarters down here will be broken.

And as a result, you can lose people who have been bound by Satan. That's the meaning of that verse. That you can bind.

That is a picture of spiritual authority. And the church must have that. You know, there are only two places where Jesus spoke about the church.

Only two places. One is here, where he speaks about discipline and church, and he uses the word church in verse 17. That if a man who's disciplined doesn't listen to them, tell the church.

And it's in the context of the church, verse 18, that he speaks about authority. It's the church exercising authority to bind something and to lose something. And notice the other place where Jesus spoke about the church is Matthew 16, 18.

The more well-known verse, on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell, the powers of spiritual darkness, will not be able to overcome it. Any church that is overcome by the powers of spiritual darkness is a church that Jesus did not build. You can be pretty sure of that.

The church that Jesus builds, people may drop out of it. That always happens. That's a weeding process that goes on all the time.

But the church that Jesus builds, Satan will not be able to overpower it. That's definite. If Satan can overpower a church, that's not the church that Jesus built.

It's some man built it. And then immediately after he speaks about the church there, again he speaks about authority. Verse 19, Peter, I give you the keys of the kingdom.

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. So it's very interesting that in the two places, the only two places where Jesus spoke about the church, Matthew 16 and 18, immediately thereafter he speaks about the authority of the church in binding satanic forces and liberating people who are gripped by Satan. It's very important for the church to have that authority.

And if we don't recognize that authority that we have over Satan, we will not be able to build a church. Jesus lived on earth with authority. Demons trembled when Jesus came.

And I believe that if you're walking in humility before God, demons will tremble before you too. I believe that. Jesus would cast out the demons with a word.

And if you're walking in the light and your conscience is clear with the authority of the name of Jesus, you can cast out the demons with a word. The devil will have no authority over your life or in your home or in your church, no matter what he tries. We cannot build the church, the body of Christ, without this authority.

It's not enough to go to Bible school and have our head crammed with Bible knowledge. We need authority. And certainly it's true all over.

I've cast out demons in the villages of India and I've cast out demons in the United States. It doesn't matter if you're civilized, cultured country, there are demons everywhere. And we need to have authority over demons.

And we need to recognize that Jesus Christ not only died for our sins on the cross, but he destroyed the works of the devil on the cross. There are two things that Jesus was manifested to do. We're trying to see the real Jesus.

1 John chapter 3. Why did Jesus appear on this earth? There are two reasons mentioned here in 1 John. Why did Jesus Christ appear on earth? Number one, 1 John 3.5. He appeared in order to take away sins. Every Christian knows that.

Number two reason, verse 8, the last part. He appeared to destroy the works of the devil. Ninety percent of Christians don't know that.

And the devil doesn't want you to know that. He doesn't want you to know that he was defeated on the cross. I'll never forget, I mentioned this before, how there was a sister in our church who brought another lady for prayer once to our home.

And when I told her to receive Christ, and I usually when I lead people to the Lord, I asked them after they finished praying to the Lord to speak to the devil. And tell Satan, Satan you were defeated on the cross. I don't belong to you.

So I told her to say that. I said, now you've spoken to Jesus, now speak to the devil. And say, you were defeated on the cross.

She changed her voice and her face and looked at me and said, I was not defeated on the cross. It was a demon inside her. I never thought that.

I thought she was just an unbeliever. Well, if a demon speaks to me, then I speak to the demon. So I told him, him, who was in her, I said, you're a liar.

You were defeated on the cross. Get out of her right now in Jesus name. He left.

And I told her then, and I say, now, now tell the devil, you were, Satan, you were defeated on the cross. She said it immediately. Any amount of counseling would not have helped her.

What she needed was not counseling. What she needed was deliverance. I remember coming across another lady like that here in the U.S. who couldn't speak the name Jesus when I was counseling her and speaking to her to accept Christ.

I said, now ask Jesus to come to her. She'd move her mouth and say, I can't say that name. Then I realized it was a demon.

When the demon was cast out, she could say the name. So we need to have authority. I don't mean just casting out demons, but spiritual authority to bind Satan's activities.

It's so important to have this authority. And dear brothers and sisters, you don't need to be a great Bible scholar. I'll tell you what you need to overcome Satan.

You need a clean conscience. You need every sin confessed and cleansed in the blood of Christ. They overcame him by the blood of the lamb.

All the accusations of Satan. If your life is not clean, don't ever try to attack. Don't ever try to fight the battle with Satan.

You remember what happened to the sons of Sceva? Seven of them tried to cast out the demon and the demon jumped on them and tore their clothes. If your life is not clean, don't try it. Go and do something else.

Go into a business or something else, but don't get into God's work. Forget it. Most important requirement, a clear conscience.

And secondly, humility. How does the devil get foothold in people? He is proud. Pride began with Satan.

And if he finds a person proud of anything, consciously proud, he says, ah, you and I got something in common. I can have some fellowship with you in that area. Maybe you're proud of your Bible knowledge.

I was also proud of something else, but we are one there. We have no power over him. That's why Jesus had such authority over Satan.

There was not an atom of pride in him. He said, learn from me for I am humble. He never said, learn from me how to preach or how to cast out demons, but learn from me for I am humble.

And I want to say to all of you, dear brothers and sisters, if you just keep these two things in mind, I'm not giving you a list of 10 things. Keep your conscience clear. That means as soon as you're aware of a sin, confess it.

Thought, word, deed, attitude, motive, as soon as you're aware of it, don't wait till the evening to confess it. Confess it immediately to the Lord. And if you've hurt some human being, go and confess it to that person.

Clear your conscience. Immediately. It's like saying, as soon as a thorn gets into your foot, pull it out.

How long do you wait before you pull a thorn out of your foot? Sin is like that. Get rid of it. And the other thing is, the only second thing is, always choose the way of humility.

If somebody yells at you and your pride says, give him a piece of your mind, choose the way of humility. You'll come to a fork in the road there now. And the devil says, give him a piece of your mind.

And Jesus says, die. Choose the way of death, humility. I can tell you, you will have such authority over Satan over a period of time.

I mean, that person might think you're a wimp or something like that. You have, you know, no guts to stand up. Let him say what he likes.

You've got authority over Satan. You're not worried about what people say about you. It's so important to have spiritual authority.

You cannot do God's work without spiritual authority. And the other thing I want to say is this, this way of humility involves, I told you, there are only two things. Keep a good conscience and humble yourself.

The way of humility involves that you never fight with human beings. Ephesians 6.12 says, we wrestle not with flesh and blood. That's one of the big differences between old covenant and new covenant.

In old covenant, the Israelites were always fighting with flesh and blood all the time. It was either the Amorites or the Philistines or somebody or the other. You read the book of Kings and Chronicles.

It's just full of fighting with flesh and blood all the time. And never with the devil, not even once. But you come to the New Testament and you see Jesus never fighting with human beings, no matter how much he was provoked.

He'd say, Father, forgive them. It's all right. You're forgiven.

But he fought the devil. And this is the one we follow. And I want to say to all of you sitting here, if you're the type of person who's fighting with human beings, whether you know it or not, you know it today that you're under the old covenant.

Whatever you may say, you may say you're filled with the spirit, speaking in tongues. It's probably a counterfeit spirit. If you're fighting with human beings, you're under the old covenant.

In the new covenant, we do not wrestle with flesh and blood. You cannot follow Jesus and fight with human beings. It's impossible.

I have also fought with human beings in my ignorant early days as a believer because I grew up in an assembly. They never taught me anything about fighting the devil. They never taught me about being filled with the Holy Spirit.

They just said accept Christ and that's it. Then you wait till you go to heaven. But as I studied the scriptures, I saw that the Lord showed me, if you want to overcome Satan, just make a decision today.

You'll never fight with flesh and blood. That from now on, you'll never raise your voice against your wife or you'll never fight with anybody. If people take away your rights, let them take it.

If they insult you, keep quiet. And if they write horrendous emails to you, just love them and bless them and leave them alone. Don't answer your accusers.

Whenever people write a string of accusations against me, I usually reply with Brother, my reply is found in Matthew 27 verse 12 to 14. You can read that sometime. Pilate said, look at these things they accuse you of, he told Jesus.

Aren't you going to say anything? And Jesus was silent. That's the way to authority over Satan. So we don't fight with human beings.

We don't fight with words. There are sometimes people who come to my house. They want to argue about some doctrine and try to convince me that what I'm teaching is wrong.

And if he's interested in an explanation, I'm willing to explain to him. But when I find him getting hot under the collar and getting heated up, I say it's time to stop. I say, let's talk about something else.

And in India, the favorite game is cricket. So I say, let's talk about cricket. Because we are on the same side then.

We want India to win. So we change the subject. I always do that.

I say, listen, I'm not going to discuss that doctrine. You can think that I don't know the answer. You can think whatever you like, but I will not fight even with words.

You just follow the simple advice, my brother, sister. If you really want to count for God, what you need is authority over Satan. If you want to drive the devil out of your home, the mess he makes.

I believe God keeps a protective wall around us and our children and our finances and our business and everything. And I don't believe God wants the devil to mess up even our business. Or if I do a business, it says in Psalm 1, whatever he does will prosper.

Prosper means I get enough for my needs. It's not that I have a huge bank account, but I have enough for my needs because I see God's kingdom first. But I believe God protects us.

He protects our work. He protects our job. He protects our business.

He protects our family. And if I have, if I walk in humility and with a clear conscience, the devil cannot touch me. I have to say the prince of the world comes where he's got nothing in me.

He can't touch me. And I wish all of you would really, and it's not so difficult. How difficult is it to ask forgiveness from God? Or to ask forgiveness from somebody else? It's only your pride that will stand in the

way.

That's all. And the devil knows that. People are so proud to ask forgiveness.

He says, let them be like that. I'll get a foothold in their life. I can mess up their life.

I can mess up their home. They'll never accomplish anything for God in their lifetime on earth. Do you want to go through life, my brother, sister, accomplishing nothing for God? You say, well, I'm not a great preacher.

You don't have to be a preacher. You don't have to be the tongue in the body. You can be something inside the body that does a great job.

But you got to be clean. You've got to have your conscience clear. You've got to go the walk the way of humility.

That's the way of spiritual authority. It's so important. And I'm, as I said, I'm not just talking about casting out demons.

But that the works of the devil will be destroyed. That the devil has no authority in our home or in our church or anywhere. It's so very important.

Coming back to Matthew 18. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. And whatever you lose on earth will be lost in heaven.

It goes on to say in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 19. It speaks about two people agreeing. That's very important.

Now, remember, a lot of people quote this out of context. Particularly verse 20, where two or three are gathered together in my name. There am I in the midst of them.

Remember one simple principle of Bible study. Never take a verse out of context. Like someone said, a text taken out of context is a pretext to prove some special doctrine you have.

So never take a text out of context. And a lot of people take that verse 20. Any little gathering of believers, two or three are gathered together in my name.

There am I in the midst of them. What for? Why is the Lord there in our midst? To bind Satan. That's why he's there.

See the context. Two or three gathered together. The Lord is in the midst.

And these two are agreed. That's the important thing. Completely united in spirit.

And then they can bind and loose. So let's take the bare minimum, two. You know, there are certain things you cannot do alone.

You can overcome sin. Even if there's nobody else around you who's a believer. Because that's just between you and the lust in your flesh and the devil.

You can overcome. But when you want to do something in a home or a church, you need to have an expression of the body. One person alone can never be an expression of the body of Christ.

You need at least another two. That's the minimum for an expression of Christ's body. Otherwise you're a lone member.

And Jesus said where two are gathered, there I am in the midst. When you're all alone, there's no midst for the Lord to be. And so for spiritual authority, casting out demons a person can do all by himself.

That's easy. But to dislodge the devil from some foothold he's got in your home or church, you need a minimum of two people. And in a home, that's father and mother, husband and wife.

And that's why the devil tries his best to come between husband and wife, so that he can come between and get to the children. He's after the children. He brings a division between husband and wife to get to the children.

He's been doing it for years. And Christians don't seem to be wake up to realize that. Why in the world is the devil trying to create a misunderstanding between you and your husband or you and your wife? It's to get into your children or to get into your home and mess up not only your life, but your family as well.

Or mess up your business or something or the other. But he can never do that if you make sure that you never allow anyone to come between you except Jesus Christ. I want to say to all of you married folk here, the times of ignorance God overlooks.

Okay, till today you were ignorant. Acts 17 30, God says, forget it. But from today onwards, you husband and wife seek to be an expression of the body of Christ right there in your home.

Make sure the devil doesn't come between you, that Christ is in you. I tell you newly married couples, start right now from now on, recognizing that when you speak to your wife, Jesus is there. Between you and her.

And as you speak, let your words go through Jesus to her or through Jesus to him. Always recognizing he's there in our midst. Be careful about what you say.

And if you slip up, it can happen. Ask God for forgiveness. Ask one another for forgiveness.

Be quick to ask for forgiveness and be quick to forgive because the devil will have no power. I'll show you this verse. 2nd Corinthians 2. 2nd Corinthians 2, it says, verse 10 and 11.

Whom you forgive anything, I forgive also. And I forgive in the presence of Christ. Why? So that, verse 11, Satan cannot get any advantage over me.

Do you realize that if you don't forgive, Satan gets an advantage over you? I forgive people in the presence of Christ. The presence of Christ. That means it's not just superficially with my words, deep from my heart.

I forgive that person for the wrong he did. So that Satan doesn't get an advantage over me. Do you know that Satan gets an advantage over you when you don't forgive somebody? He's the one who hurt you.

You've already been hurt. And now you don't forgive that person, you're going to get hurt more. Because Satan gets an advantage over you.

It's so important to understand this. We're not supposed to give the devil any place in our life. I decided that long ago.

I don't care how much I have to humble myself. I don't care how much I have to take the blame. I'm willing to do all that, but Satan will have no place in my life.

I will not allow him to have any place in my home. From my part, I will do my very best to always be united with my wife. Never to allow any tension or misunderstanding to come.

And if you have a partner who's equally willing to do that, boy, you've got an unbreakable home, an unshakable home. And that is the atmosphere in which your children must grow up. I plead with you, I beseech you like Paul sometimes used to say, brethren, or like John used to say, little children, I urge you, make sure that only Jesus is always between you, husband and wife.

And the same thing in a church. In the New Testament church, there is no such thing as a single man leader. It's never found in the New Testament.

Always dual leadership. In the Old Testament, there were lone prophets. Every great man of God in the Old Testament was a lone man.

Noah, Abraham, Moses. He went alone to the mountain. David, Jeremiah.

They all worked alone, the great prophets. In Jeremiah's time, there were other prophets also, like Habakkuk and all the other prophets. But God never allowed them to work together.

I think they'd be fighting with each other if they did come together. So he allowed them to operate independently. Because they could not work together till the Holy Spirit came.

That's not saying anything less about Jeremiah. But he didn't have the Holy Spirit. You remember how these great apostles who had walked with Jesus for three and a half years were still fighting on the last day at the Last Supper? Because they didn't have the Holy Spirit.

It all changed when the day of Pentecost came. So, they were all lone people. Even the greatest prophet of all, John the Baptist, he was a lone man.

Teaching us that in the Old Covenant, even two people could not be one. Entire Old Covenant, all the way from Noah down to John the Baptist. Lone people.

And if you're a lone Christian, you are in the Old Covenant. You know, you go church hopping, going here, you like go to this restaurant, and then you go to a Thai restaurant, and then to a Japanese restaurant, and to a Chinese restaurant. That's how a lot of people go to churches.

I like the food here, and then another day I'm going to like the food here. That's not the way you're going to build a church. Those are lone people.

They are living under the Old Covenant. I'm not saying they're not believers, but they're Old Covenant believers. They'll never accomplish anything for God in their life.

Maybe they just scrape it into heaven. And what do you want the Lord to say to you when you get to heaven? Well done, good and faithful servant. Or he's going to say, well, you made it, did you? I never thought you'd make it.

What do you want him to tell you when you get there? I don't want him to say you've made it, did you? I want him to say, Lord, well done, good and faithful servant. And if you want the Lord to say that to you, don't be a lone Christian. Seek for fellowship.

Seek for a place where there can be an expression of the body of Christ. Even if it's a small group of people who are really seeking to be one with each other, who deny themselves and become one with each other. Not perfect.

There's nothing perfect on earth. So when two people are like that, then agreed. It's the word agreed in Matthew 18, 19.

It's a Greek word called symphonio, from which we get the musical word symphony. Two people playing on the same scale, the symphony. And there are three, three instruments playing together like these great orchestras with 30, 40, 50 people all playing violins and other instruments.

Oh, it's a symphony. That is what a church is supposed to be in God's ears, a symphony. Like I told you yesterday, two musical instruments in a church not playing together is not at all disturbing God.

The symphony he's listening to is all the people sitting in that church. What is their relationship with each other? That is the music God is listening to. I don't know whether most churches realize that.

That's why I've, as I said yesterday, in our church, Sunday is not the most important day. It's Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. It's the way we live.

And like I said yesterday, it doesn't matter one bit if the music was not good on Sunday or the preaching was a little boring or it went on too long. Absolutely unimportant. Is everybody here in fellowship with each other? Are they all living with a clear conscience? Maybe there are no great preachers in your church, no great musicians in your church, nobody who can play an instrument.

Doesn't matter. Are they living in a clear conscience and walking in humility and denying themselves? That's a symphony that ascends to God there, which is better than any music produced by some church orchestra. I'll tell you that.

But most people don't understand these things. Do you think the early church had an orchestra? You think those Christians, they were running from cave to cave sometimes and house to house. Where did they have time to carry all their instruments? But they had a symphony coming because they were united.

They loved one another. They looked at those Christians and said, boy, how these Christians love one another, not what wonderful music they play. That's not it.

That's today's corrupt backslid in Christianity, which is major in all these things. In any case, the world can do that better than us. The church must major on something which the world cannot do better than us.

The world can produce music any day better than the best church in the world. The world's got better eloquent speakers than any church can have. But there's one thing the world cannot have.

It cannot overcome Satan. He's the prince of that world. But in the church, we overcome the devil.

And for that, there must be the symphony. So the devil always tries to bring some disunity. So whenever you hear a voice trying to create a disturbance, recognize that as Satan.

Don't listen to gossip without clarifying it with the other person. There are a lot of gossipers in the church. We just go from house to house.

Paul speaks about them in 1 Timothy 5. They've got nothing else to do. They go from house to house gossiping, speaking evil. I'll tell you how I got rid of gossip in my house.

Somebody would come to my house and say, Brother Zach, have you heard this about so-and-so? I said, no. And he tells me, I said, just hang on a minute. Let me just call that person and ask him if this is correct.

No, no, no, no, no. Don't ask him, please. This is only for prayer.

I said, no. I said, no, I have a habit. If anybody tells me anything about X or Y, I immediately call up X and Y and find out if it is true.

They never come back with gossip to my house. You try that method. I assure you, it'll cure your house of gossip.

Would you allow somebody to come with their garbage bin and dump it in your sitting room? But that's exactly what gossip is. And then, you know, he did it once. And you know, next time he comes with his garbage bin, you're going to let him in? These are serious things.

If you're really interested in your life, counting for Christ, protect your life and your home and your church from such things. Yes, people do do wrong. If some, for example, if some brother in our church is getting drunk, I'd like to know about it.

And somebody comes and tells me, Brother Zach, so-and-so is getting drunk. Thank you for telling me. I'll check up with him.

I'll help him. And I always, this is the rule I've set in our church. If you go and say anything about anyone to an elder brother who's got a compassionate heart, that's never gossip.

Because he can do something about it. But if you go and talk to all the other people who can do nothing about it, that's gossip. They're not going to help you.

You're just scandalizing somebody. So it's very important to preserve this unity in the church. Dear brothers and sisters, I believe God wants to see little expressions of his body all across the Bay Area, many perhaps.

Little expressions of the body of Christ that have authority over Satan, where they're seeking to be one with each other. Not perfect, but trying to produce a symphony. You know how orchestras practice and practice and practice.

And what you hear finally in their day, they present it to the public. It's a beautiful symphony. And so it is when we come together in the church, we share, we exhort one another.

And the ultimate goal is that we can have a beautiful symphony that we can give to God. And that should be your goal. And I believe that every one of us should be a part of a church that's like that.

I'm not here to tell you what church you should go to, but you certainly should be part of a church that is seeking to go this way. That is the New Testament church. I remember when we started out, we were very small.

And we said, we're not going to lower the standards. We're not going to please anybody. We're not.

We're going to make disciples. And we're going to seek to, and we found little by little, God establishing churches and exercising authority over Satan. And we got inroads into Satan's territory.

See, there's a lot of difference in, unfortunately, when what we call church today from what we see in the New Testament. If you were to read the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles with a completely unprejudiced mind, you'll find that the only churches there were in the New Testament were those planted by the Apostles. Apostles planted churches, they appointed elders, and they had authority over those churches to correct the elders or to solve their problems, like in Corinth, wrote letters to them.

You'd never find in anywhere in the New Testament churches which are built like corporate structures, where you have a person right at the top who's CEO or chairman or superintendent or Pope or senior pastor, whatever it is, and then underneath them, just like a corporate structure all the way down to the bottom. It's never found. You find it in churches today, but it's never found in the New Testament.

And all these folks are elected. You never find election in the New Testament. No elder was elected in the New Testament.

You see, these are all the methods of the devil. The church is not a democracy where everybody votes who's going to be our leader. The church is a family.

And children don't get together and say, well, who's going to be our father next year? There's no such thing. That's so crazy. Is your church a corporate structure or is it a family? In a family, there is no election.

And children don't get a vote as to what they're supposed to do. The parents just tell them, this is what you're supposed to do. See, that's eldership in a church.

It's loving eldership like a father and mother. This is the way a church is supposed to function. But it's so rare.

We got so used to this Babylonian system, which is called a church, that we don't even see this is completely contrary to the New Testament. And I believe God is seeking to restore that in these last days. Churches just like the New Testament.

Maybe small, but little expressions of symphonies that God delights in hearing. Where people are willing to sacrifice. You know, sacrifice is a very important thing in the church.

You know, sometimes we think there's a lot of inconvenience. I don't know whether you noticed that brother who was in a wheelchair here yesterday. That motorized wheelchair, he was sitting there.

I asked him. He's a young Russian brother whose feet were crippled when he was 20 years ago. He's been on that wheelchair for 20 years.

And he was converted fairly recently. And I asked him, how did you come in touch with my name? He says, the world will call it an accident. But it was no accident.

God brought me in touch with you on the internet. And I've been listening to your messages for so long. And I heard, you know, from our CH Church website that you're going to be here.

So I decided to come. I said, where are you coming from? He said, Sacramento. I knew that was quite a distance.

I said, how did you come? He said, I took the bus and took a train. I said, when did you get up? He said, I got up at 4.30 in the morning so that I could be here by 10.15. What did he come for? You know, a person who makes... I've seen people like that in some of our smaller churches in India who travel long distances to come and seek fellowship. There is a sacrifice which God recognizes and honors.

Look at the little things we complain about. Think if you had to be in a wheelchair for 20 years, would you take the trouble to get into a train and a bus and all that and travel for six and a half hours just to come and listen to God's word? I was so challenged. I felt so humbled.

I felt like weeping. And I said, Lord, who am I that this person should come all the way here to listen to me? That really humbles me before God. I say, Lord, I better take my responsibility more seriously when I stand up, that I really have something to say and not waste people's time.

It's a very serious thing to build a church. And I pray that all of us will be gripped by saying, Lord, you gave everything up for me when you came from heaven to earth. I'm willing to give up everything for you to build your church.

Christ loved the church, gave himself for it. Say to the Lord, Lord, I love your church and I'm willing to give myself up completely for it. Okay.

Amen. Sandeep will conclude. I want to just share a couple of final thoughts.

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