

# The Upward Pathway to Glory

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of studying the Old Testament, controlling our tongue, trusting in the Lord, and fellowship with God's people in order to live a victorious Christian life.*

**Duration:** 58:15

**Scripture:** Psalm 131:1

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "True Worship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and highlights the dangers of pride, the need for unity in the church, and the ultimate goal of becoming true worshipers. It encourages believers to focus on building God's house, avoiding pride, seeking unity, and ultimately becoming worshipers in spirit and truth.

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## Transcript

And this morning I want to turn to the Old Testament to Psalm 120. The things written in the Old Testament are for our instruction, warning. There are many types of New Testament truths in the Old Testament that we can study with great profit.

We don't go too much into it like some people do, because if we go too much into studying typology, you know, like so many, every little detail of the parts of the tabernacle, what I have found with people who do that is they get taken up with information and cleverness and clever thoughts. The Bible was not given to stimulate our cleverness. In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 11, 25, I thank you, Father, you have hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent, but revealed them to babes.

I found a lot of people who studied Old Testament typology defeated by sin. What's the use of studying typology if it's defeated by sin? The other thing I want to clarify is, but we can study a little bit because if you read in the New Testament, occasionally you see a reference to comparing Ishmael and Isaac as a picture of law and grace. Few, but it's not much.

And we must limit ourselves in studying Old Testament typology to the limit that the New Testament writers do. The Holy Spirit never inspired New Testament writers to study every detail of the tabernacle. That is all for clever people who get led astray.

In the same way, the other thing I need to clarify is some people ask this question, Brother Zag, you speak so much about the Old Covenant being abolished and the New Covenant now being established. Does it mean we don't read, don't need to read the Old Testament? There's a difference between the 39 books of the Bible, which man has called the Old Testament. Please remember that.

When you read in the first page of your Bible, Old Testament, that is not what God called it. It's what man has called it. Do I believe in the first 39 books of the Bible? Yes, inspired by God.

But the Old Covenant is an agreement that God made with Israel through Moses, where you have to pay your tithe and you have to make your sacrifices and you got to go to Jerusalem three times a year and so many things like that. I don't want to go into all the details, but since I'm not an Israelite and I'm not a descendant of Abraham and I'm not a follower of Moses, the Old Covenant is not for me. My leader is Jesus Christ, who made a new covenant between God and me.

And so I'm not in the Old Covenant anymore. But there's tremendous profit from the 39 books of the Bible, which man has called the Old Testament. And for convenience sake, we call it Old Testament, but that's not what God has called it.

And that's why there's so much confusion. Please remember that. So there's a lot in the Old Testament books, 39 books, which we can learn from.

For example, Psalm 120. This is the first of 15 Psalms, Psalm 120 to Psalm 134, which as far as we know, the Israelites would sing when they traveled from their hometown to Jerusalem. There was a law mentioned in Deuteronomy that the Israelites had to go to Jerusalem at least three times every year.

They had to meet together three times every year because God's presence was in Jerusalem when they were not backslidden. When they were backslidden, they went through an empty ritual, which is most of the time. Now, how many times do we meet with God every year? Every day.

And Jerusalem, in Galatians, it speaks about a heavenly Jerusalem, which is the church. And the church, by the way, is not this building. It's people.

And it's good to meet with the people of God. The Bible says, don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, but so much the more as you see the day of the Lord approaching. But here was a song they used to sing, and it's called a song of ascents.

Because in the original Hebrew, it's got something to do, the words got something to do with stairs. So, it was like ascending up to Jerusalem. And there's something we can learn there about our spiritual ascent, ascending up to glory, let's say.

And it starts at the bottom and goes all the way up to the top. So, I thought I would just, we would look through this briefly, and then you can look at it in greater detail when you are studying on your own. I want you to notice that in the Old Testament, they didn't have the light that we have in the New Covenant, because they didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling within.

That's why they would hear God speaking from the outside. But now the Holy Spirit's within, God speaks to us from the inside. It's far better.

So, you'll notice some things here as we go along, how the New Covenant is superior. Let's start with Psalm 120. In my trouble, I cried to the Lord, and he answered me.

This is where we start. Every human being starts. We are all in deep trouble because of sin.

The trouble is not because of a recession. The trouble is not because you have financial difficulties, or you got a difficult wife, or rebellious children. The trouble, brother, sister, is because of sin.

That's the root cause of all the problems in the world. Once we understand that, you'll stop blaming your husband, and wife, and children, and neighbors, and XYZ, every one of them. Say, Lord, the trouble is with sin.

They didn't have that light in the Old Testament. I'm in deep trouble, and the Lord answered me. But what is the trouble the old Psalmist is talking about? Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.

And I want to tell you this. When you read Scripture, it gives you an indication of your own way of thinking. Now, when you are being oppressed by people who are telling lies about you, and deceiving you, your prayer is, Lord, deliver me from these lying lips.

And that's what the Psalmist is saying. He said, Lord, all types of people around me telling lies about me, spreading scandals about me, deceiving me. Please deliver me from all these people.

What shall I give to you, you deceivers? With your tongue, you need sharp arrows of the warrior, and burning coals of the broom tree. That's what you guys need for trying to deceive me. You remember in the book of Isaiah, we read, chapter 5, I don't have time to show it to you.

Isaiah would say, go on to this group, go on to that group, go on to the drunkards, and go on to those who are covetous and occupied by more and more real estate, so there's no place for poor people, and all that. And everything he said was 100% accurate. Then in the next chapter, chapter 6, he sees the Lord, and he says, woe is me.

That's the mark of a man who has seen God. He doesn't say, oh, what a wretched wife I have. He says, oh, what a wretched man I am.

Oh, what a wretched woman I am. If you're not saying that, I would say in Jesus' name, you have not met the Lord yet. The more frequently you meet with the Lord, the more frequently you say that.

Oh, wretched man that I am. Not in a gloomy, depressed type of way. I've seen people who say, oh, wretched man that I am, oh, wretched woman that I am.

They're always gloomy and depressed. Jesus wasn't gloomy and depressed. Paul, who said that originally, was not gloomy and depressed.

He was a man who says rejoice in the Lord always when he was lying in a stinking dungeon of a prison. That's because he stopped looking at other people and seeing how wretched they were. He saw himself, but he saw himself cleansed in the blood of Christ, and so he was rejoicing.

So when you read Psalm 120, you can either think of the lying lips of other people and other deceivers who are causing you trouble, then you are an old covenant person. But if you become a new covenant

person, you can read that Psalm and say, Lord, the big problem is my lying lips, my deceitful tongue, the way I live as a hypocrite, giving people an impression about myself, which is not true. I'm a deceiver.

Lord, deliver me from this wretched deception in my spirit and the careless way in which I use my tongue, the way I hurt people with my tongue, not worried about others. Brother, you're in the new covenant. It's a very simple way to find out whether you're living in the old covenant or new covenant.

Do you see your own sin or do you see the sin of others? Very simple test. Keep asking yourself every day. The world is full of people who see sin in others, in their wives, in their neighbors, in their boss, in other people in the church, in the elders, in every Tom, Dick, and Harry, except in themselves.

Old covenant was like that. The wonderful things when Christ comes into our life is we get light on ourselves like Isaiah and say, oh, it's me. Oh, wretched man that I am.

But it doesn't take us to gloom. No. Because we read in Isaiah when he said that as soon as he said that, the fire of God came from heaven and cleansed away his sin and anointed his tongue.

And the Lord said to him, go now and speak for me. Can you speak for God? Yes. When you acknowledge that your lips have been unclean, when you've learned to control your tongue, you can be the mouthpiece of God.

I'm absolutely convinced that the reason why many people are not the mouthpiece of God is because they are not careful with their tongue the rest of the time. They're always blaming others, criticizing others, and well, then you waste your earthly life. I mean, you could have been a servant of God for many years.

I don't even stand in a pulpit. A servant of God may never stand in a pulpit sometimes. You can be a servant of God as a mother, speak God's word to your children every day, as a sister to all the sisters who come to your house.

Instead of gossiping to them, you can speak God's word to them. If only God could see that you control your tongue a little bit. If only you could say like this, oh, lying lips inside my mouth, oh, deceitful tongue inside my mouth.

What shall I give you, you deceitful tongue? I want to burn you up with burning coals from the broom trees. Not talking about other people's tongue, he's talking about his own. Oh God, woe is me.

The words of Isaiah. But he's not thinking of himself, unfortunately, because I'm living with these wretched people around me. I'm dwelling in the midst of terrible neighbors.

I'm thinking, he's thinking of his wife and neighbors and, oh Lord, all these people around me. Too long my soul has had its dwelling with those who hate for peace. Hate peace, but I'm for peace when I speak for.

When you make that new covenant, you see your greatest need is in yourself. And begin with the tongue, because the Bible says, if a man knows how to control his tongue, he's a perfect man. You read that in James 1? When I read that verse, let me show you that verse.

James chapter 1. I don't know how you react to it. I'm sure you read it many times, but how did you react to it when you read this? It says, first of all, in James 1, in verse 26, if a man thinks he's religious or spiritual, as we'd call it, and cannot control his tongue, he deceives his own heart and his religion is worthless. And then when you come to chapter 3, it says there, we all stumble, verse 2, sorry, we all

stumble in many ways, but if a man does not stumble in what he says, he's a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body.

Put these two verses together. If a man cannot control his tongue, his whole Christianity is worth zero. If you don't know how to speak to your husband and wife in a gracious way, your Christianity, spirit filled, speaking in tongues, call it what you like, is worth zero.

And you won't hear it in many pulpits. You'll hear it here. And secondly, this is all scripture.

If a man can control his tongue, he's a perfect man, able to control his whole body. You want to control the lusts in your flesh? Brother, control your tongue. It says you'll be able to bridle every desire in your body.

I want to bridle the desires in my body. Don't you? Don't you? Oh God, how can I control my eyes? I'll tell you. Start controlling your tongue.

It's easier to control the tongue than the eyes. Very difficult to control the eyes. Control your tongue.

But if God sees you're not bothered about controlling your tongue, and when you slip up with your tongue, you don't even confess it. You don't confess it to God. You don't confess it to man.

God says, you can cry for 50 years to control your eyes. You'll never do it. But I see you're not serious.

Sometimes our problem is not solved by tackling what we see is the problem, but somewhere else. The problem, the root of the problem lies somewhere else. I want to encourage all of you to read these verses in James and see it seriously.

When I say, Lord, I want to be a perfect man, we have in front of this pulpit. Let's press on to perfection. Where shall we start? With our tongue.

Psalms 121. We go to the next one. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains, from when shall my help come? And the, you know, the Israelites had, when they backslid, they used to have their worship of their idols and all on top of the mountains.

They had their altars to their gods on their highest mountains. And the Psalmist is saying, are those gods going to help me? Those idols up there going to help me? No. I lift up my eyes to the mountains from when shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Not from those idols on top of the mountains. Dear brothers and sisters, we must have a testimony to people who do not worship the true God that our God is not like the false gods. Our God is not like the idols.

Our God is a God who can actually help us. Do you remember how the heathen came up to Abraham and said, we've seen God is with you? Yeah. They must be able to see that our God, our help comes from the Lord, verse 2, who made heaven and earth.

Not from some mountain. Not from some idol. Not from, we can also look at mountains as big shots on the earth, influential people.

Can some chief minister help you if you have a problem? Or a big police official help you perhaps when you get into trouble? Where do you look for help? Tell me honestly, when you get into trouble, what's your

first reaction? Call up one of the elders of the church? You'll always be dependent on them all your life. No wonder you don't grow. There's nothing wrong in asking the elders for prayer.

There's nothing wrong in asking influential people you know to help you, but woe unto you if you depend on them. Even when you're sick, by all means, go to a doctor, get the best treatment, get the best hospital you can afford, but let your dependence be on God. My help comes from the Lord.

When I'm sick, I'll go to a doctor, I'll go to a hospital, but I trust the Lord to heal me. I can ask human beings to help me, but I trust the Lord ultimately. Human beings will let me down and there are certain problems no human being can help me.

My help comes from the Lord. It's an attitude. The Bible says Jeremiah 17 5, cursed is the man who trusts in man and who makes flesh his arm.

That's why I'm scared to trust in men. That's why I'm scared to trust in doctors. That's why I'm scared to trust in medicines.

That's why I'm scared to trust in influential people whom I know who can help me because there's a curse, a curse. It doesn't say it's bad, not bad, it's cursed. Jeremiah 17 5, to lean upon man.

To ask a man for help is okay, sure. Jesus asked a man to provide a room for them to have their last supper. There's nothing wrong in asking, but to depend, to lean upon someone, there's a curse on it and I do not want the curse of God on my life.

So if I depend on something earthly and not on the Lord, the Lord says, okay, try. Those who lean upon Egypt will fail. It'll be like a broken reed.

You lean upon it and you'll collapse. Ask people who trusted men. Dear brothers and sisters, early in life, learn to trust in the Lord.

This is the song of our sins. We're climbing up. My help is in the Lord and he will not allow my foot to slip.

Verse three, he who keeps me will never slumber, not sleep. He will not allow my foot to slip, slip. You heard me say this.

When I was a child, I used to say, I got victory over sin. When I grew up and became a man, I put away childish things and I say, Jesus kept me from falling. Is there a difference between saying I got victory over sin and Jesus kept me from falling? World of difference.

It's true, he got victory, but when you say I got victory, the emphasis is on the I. When you say Jesus kept me from falling, the emphasis is on Jesus. What he did for me, he can do for you. It's not because I grit my teeth.

He will not allow my foot to slip. Oh boy, I can tell you when I see people slipping around me, I say, Lord, it's you who keep my feet from slipping. I cannot take any credit or glory to myself.

I keep my face in the dust. You keep my feet from slipping because when I sleep, you don't sleep. When I'm dozing off, you don't doze off.

You're watching me. When some Haman is plotting to hang me, like in the book of Esther, God deals with that Haman. When some Herod is plotting to execute Peter in Acts 12, God delivers Peter.

He never slumbers or sleeps. Put your trust in this God. The God who lived in Mordecai's time is the same today, and the God who lived in Peter's time is just the same today, and we are to be a living testimony to that truth that our help comes from him.

The Lord is our keeper, and he will protect us, verse 7, from all evil. I don't believe evil is people physically hurting me or even killing me. That's not evil.

If somebody kills me, is that evil? No, it's to go straight to heaven. Is sending somebody to heaven evil? No, that's not evil. Evil is sin.

Evil is yielding to the devil. Evil is watching internet pornography. Evil is looking at dirty pictures.

That's evil. Being persecuted, that's not evil. That's an honor.

To be killed for Christ's sake, that's an honor. That's not evil. I don't say, Lord, protect me from evil.

I've never prayed, oh, Lord, don't let anybody kill me for Christ's sake. No, keep me from evil. You've got to identify what evil is.

Otherwise, if you think those other people are evil and you need to be protected from them, you're a follower of Moses. It's good. Old covenant is better than no covenant, but I say new covenant is better than old covenant.

So, and the new covenant person, when he says, Lord, protect me from evil, he's not thinking of this person, that person, and the other person. He's thinking of sin. The Lord will guard you're going out and coming in.

Right, let's go to Psalm 122 now. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. And as I said earlier, this is not the house of the Lord.

This is a meeting place. The house of the Lord is people. If we were to meet in a garden, the house of the Lord would be there.

If we were to meet in some cave like the early Christians had to meet, the house of the Lord would be there. It's people. I was glad when I got an opportunity to fellowship with one of God's people.

That's the meaning here. Are you glad? Are you glad when you can meet with a brother and talk about spiritual things? I was glad when they said to me, let's go to the house of the Lord. Let's have some fellowship.

And our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a picture of the church. People again, people.

Church that is built compact together, to which the tribes go up to give thanks to the name of the Lord, for their thrones are set for judgment. Thrones of the house of David. When David sat on his throne or Solomon sat on his throne, he would judge that woman who came and that woman who came, whose child is it, I'll tell you.

But in the New Testament, when we set up thrones for judgment, we set up thrones to judge ourselves first. That's the house of God. 1 Peter 4, verse 17.

I want you to be familiar with this verse. If you want to be a part of God's house, if you want to be a part of this church, an effective part of this church, here is the way. It's not by getting your name in the telephone list.

It's by doing what's written in 1 Peter 4, verse 17. And even if your name is not in the telephone list, if you do 1 Peter 4, verse 17, you'll be in the house of God. What is that? Judgment must begin in the house of God.

It must begin with us first. That's it. You need to read that much.

That's enough. What is the mark of the house of God? It's a place where judgment begins with us first. God is my witness that I have judged myself for nearly 35 years.

I never did it much in the olden days. I judged a lot of other people. Unfortunately, in my early days, I did judge myself plus other people.

But gradually, I'm coming to the place where I say, I just want to judge myself. I don't want to judge other people because it's none of my business. God can do that very well without my help.

Did you know that God can judge other people without your helping him? That when he sits on the throne as a judge, he doesn't want your advice. Thank you very much. He can do it.

Say, thank you. Thank you for what you're saying, but I don't need your advice. I can handle that without your help.

Thank you. I don't need your opinion about that person which you're airing to it every time they can air it. I know exactly.

And I know certain things which you don't know. And I don't judge so harshly as you do because I see certain things which you don't see. You know, it's a terrible thing for a judge to give a false judgment.

Think of judges who condemn somebody to be hanged and after he's hanged, discovers some evidence that the guy was not guilty. Boy, if I were a judge there, I'd never forgive myself for the rest of my life. I got a fellow hanged because to the best of the evidence I got, I thought he was guilty.

And later on, some evidence crops up that he's not guilty. Scary. Okay.

We're not sitting in thrones like that. Thank God being judges. But most human beings without being appointed judges by anybody do become judges of most people around them, especially their close friends and relatives.

True. Have you judged anybody in Argentina? Tell me. Have you judged anybody in China or Russia? Have you judged anybody in Delhi or Bombay or let's come closer home in Bidar perhaps or Chitbalapur? Have you judged anybody in Chitbalapur? No, it's in Bangalore and not even in Bangalore city.

It's closer home that we judge people. Thrones are set for judgment. The household of God judgment begins with us first.

I told you the other day how for many years I had this verse in front of my table. I don't need it anymore because it's written in my heart now. The happiest people in the world are those who judge themselves always and never judge others.

I sat and looked at that verse for about 25 years. The happiest people in the world are those who judge themselves always and never judge others. It was a mountain to climb.

I didn't get there overnight, but I decided I'm going to reach the top of that. I do not want to judge others because I don't know all the details. I see 10% of their life even if I live with them and if you don't live with them, you probably see 1% of their life.

What type of judge would it be who judges others based on 1% of the evidence? He'd be thrown out of his judge seat by any government. We need to be thrown out. Say, Lord, I'm sorry.

I've judged people knowing 1% of their life. Let me tell you this. If you live with me 24 hours, you know 10% of my life.

Got it? If you live with me 24, that's people who live in my home, know 10% of my life. If you see me only occasionally like this in the meeting, you know 1% of my life and you got to be a real idiot to judge anybody after knowing 1% of their life. Wouldn't you agree there? What would you think of a teacher marking a question paper that a student has answered, examination paper, and looking at 1% of it and deciding what marks to give? Such a teacher should be thrown out.

What about you? I'll tell you one person about whom you know 100%, at least not 100%, but quite a lot, and that's yourself. Even ourselves know very little. That's why Paul says, I don't even judge myself fully because the Lord knows things about me, but as far as I can see, I cleanse myself so that I can be free from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness.

So that's where the thrones of judgment are to be set. Right, let's move to Psalm 123. To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens.

Now it is not for looking up to the Lord for help like in Psalm 121. Here it's looking to the Lord now as the eyes of a servant look to the hand of the master. Verse 2 saying, Master, what do you have to tell me? There's a beautiful paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 4 verse 2. I don't have time to look up all these references right now, but I'll tell you them.

You can look it up later. It says in the James version is, moreover, it's required of stewards that a man be found faithful. The living Bible paraphrases it as the most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his master tells him to.

The most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his master tells him to. And you know people who say, come on, do something for God. And you try to do something for God.

Do you think one angel in heaven is telling the other angel, hey Gabriel, go do something for God, man. No. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

What does Gabriel do? He doesn't run around heaven doing something for God. He waits before God and say, God, what do you want me to do? That was the thing that changed Paul's life. The road to Damascus said, who are you? First question, I'm Jesus.

First thing we need to know is to know the Lord. Second question, what will thou have me to do? Only two questions. All your life is solved.

Who are you? Jesus. I want to know you more and more all through my life. Second question, what will you have me to do Lord? It was the only two questions Paul asked on the Damascus road and he kept asking them to the end of his life.

What will you have me to do? Now I'm in prison Lord. I didn't want to come here, but I got thrown into prison for preaching the gospel. What do you want me to do? Write a few letters.

Okay. Thank God he listened. It's wonderful.

I remember many years ago, I learned from one or two godly men, one whom I knew, one whom I'd only heard about, how they would listen and wherever they went, there would be a church planted. They would move, move, move, move. And I said, Lord, this is the best way to serve you.

Not running around doing something for God, but waiting on you as the eyes of a servant look up to the master and say, what do you want me to do? The Lord is looking for those who will wait on him and they will do the work that he gives them. And a lot of work that he doesn't give them leaves it alone. How could Jesus say at the end of his life in John 17, for I finished the work you gave me to do.

He hadn't been to China. He hadn't been to Africa. Wasn't there need, weren't there needs in China and Africa and India? Plenty of need.

Jesus says, my father never told me to meet that need. That's all. He'll take care of that.

The father told me to do certain things here. He told me to stay at home for 30 years. I stayed at home for 30 years.

He told me to preach for three and a half years and heal the sick and cast out demons. I did that. Such a short time, three and a half years, you mean your ministry's over? That's all my father told me to do.

Father, I finished the work you gave me to do. Now glorify me. And he went, have you learned the lesson? You can't do things for God with your cleverness and intelligence.

There are enough people in Christendom who tried to do that and make a mess of their lives and the work of God and everything else. No, we look to the Lord our God. Be gracious to us, verse three.

Okay, go to Psalm 124. See, we are climbing. Remember, there's a song of ascents.

Had it not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, verse two, then they would have swallowed us alive. We would think that if a man's serving a God, we don't have any opposition. I'll tell you this, opposition is our salvation.

The thing that kept us close to God in the early days was persecution. The early days of this church, we were opposed and hounded and criticized and called heretics, false prophets, and every imaginable name. Men rose up against us.

It's good for us. It protected us, made us cling to the Lord. When David was running from cave to cave to cave, running away from Saul who was persecuting him, he never committed adultery.

You know when he committed adultery? When he was a king and he was living in a palace and he stopped going to battles. Now, he says, now I can send my juniors to fight the battle. That's when he fell.

When men rise up against us, and they still do. There are a lot of people still opposing us here and there and on the internet and et cetera. God bless them.

I feel sorry for them. I don't feel sorry for us. They would have swallowed us up alive, the people who tried to oppose us when their anger was kindled against us.

It would have been like waters that would have engulfed us, but bless the Lord. Verse six, who has not given us to be torn by their teeth. They would have liked to tear us apart, but do you think the Lord will let his servants be torn apart by their enemies? Oh, no.

A soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the hunter. The snare is broken. We have escaped.

Our help is in the name of the Lord. So, the Christians who follow Jesus in his ascending way will find persecution, but he trusts the Lord to deliver him. Psalm 125, those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people. In the midst of all this attack from enemies, we are unmoved because we trust in God. Those who trust in the Lord, not those who look for human ways of escaping, those who trust in the Lord, as the mountains around Jerusalem cannot be shaken.

Even the earthquake doesn't shake it. The Lord surrounds his people and like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, we stand strong. It says here in verse three, the scepter, the rod of the wicked, will not rest on the land of the righteous.

It may hit the righteous man, but it will not rest there. So, God will take it away. He allows the wicked to persecute the righteous.

And one reason, like I told you just now, is so that the righteous don't put forth their hands to do wrong. I told you how David did wrong when he stopped facing persecution. Dear brother, sister, thank God when your life is a struggle and when you have difficulties, when you have trials, when you have problems, when you have health problems, financial problems, thank God for it.

That'll make you cling to God and you're not likely to sin. It's when we stop facing problems and life becomes easy and get plenty of money and riches and wealth and health, that's the time you sin. So, the Lord allows the rod of the wicked.

It will never rest on us, but it may hit us occasionally and that also is to prevent us from putting our hand to do wrong. Thank God for it. And we need that always in our climbing, ascending way.

The devil's always there to knock us down, to push us down. But the Lord allows us to face trial and opposition. I can personally say that the thing that's helped me tremendously in my life to cling to God has been opposition, persecution, misunderstanding, trial, difficulty, problems, etc.

Do good to Lord, to those who are upright in their hearts. The only thing I need to watch is that my heart is sincere and upright. Then the Lord will take care of all those.

But if you're a believer, verse 5, and you turn aside to crooked ways, if there's some crookedness in your heart, brother, then the Lord will lead you away with the doers of iniquity. So, you have a choice. In this ascending way, it doesn't matter if the rod of the righteous hits me.

I say, Lord, that's only to keep me from doing wrong. David said, let the righteous man slap me. It'll be like anointing oil upon my head.

Would you allow a righteous man to slap you? Would you get offended if a godly man gives you a word of rebuke? It's like oil upon your head to keep you from doing wrong. Blessed are you, if you have a man of God like that to tell you when you go do something wrong. Psalm 126.

When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, we were like those who dream. This is coming back from the captivity of Babylon. We know that Babylon is a picture of the false church, corrupt Christendom, that doesn't have the values of the new covenant, that does not honor God.

And the Lord brought us out of that. We were like those who dream and say, Lord, it's wonderful you delivered us from Babylon. Our mouth is filled with laughter.

And the people in the nation said, the Lord has done great things for us. And Lord, restore our captivity. Deliver us from all captivity.

I'm not, I'll tell you honestly, I'm not satisfied that I just got out of Babylon, a corrupt system. I've got something worse within me called a corrupt flesh. And I want to be delivered from that captivity every day.

Don't rejoice that, oh, I'm a member of CFC now, good church, good reputation, good holy church. Brother, you'll be the biggest backslider in this church if you don't see there's another corrupt flesh inside you from which you need deliverance every day. No matter how spiritual you are.

I've been a believer 50 years. I have a corrupt flesh in me that I live in fear of every day. And if you fear, you will not fall.

The one who thinks he stands, I'm all right, will fall. But in order to come into this deliverance from captivity, we got to do a little weeping. We got to wet our pillows at night.

Have you ever wet your pillows at night with tears? Not tears that you shed for yourself. All people are treating me and all people are saying bad things about me. Rubbish.

Finish with all that. But Lord, how I let you down today. That thought that came into my mind didn't honor you.

That word I spoke, that rude word, that angry word, forgive me, Lord. I want to ask you whether you've ever wept on your pillow at night for things, for sins that nobody ever saw. You'll be a man, a woman of God in no time.

But if you don't weep at night, you just come here and sing praises to the Lord. You can be a backslider like other Christians. Those who sow in tears, verse five, will reap with joyful shouting.

Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be strengthened. Comforted means strengthened. They who go forth weeping, weeping, carrying the precious seed of God's word will come again with a shout of joy.

If you see people today rejoicing with sheaves, it's because they are wept in secret. They didn't weep in front of you to get your honor. You know how if you see a preacher weeping in the pulpit, you all feel a little sad.

No. Some people are temperamentally like that. They weep easily.

And some people can manifest your tears just to order. I couldn't do that even if I tried. Not because I'm not interested.

But I believe we must weep a lot in secret, in secret. Jeremiah said, I will weep in secret for you. Jeremiah 13, I think it's verse 17, I weep in secret.

Those who weep like that will have plenty of sheaves. The Father will reward you openly. Psalm 127, unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain to build it.

I think he's talking, first of all, of our labor in our business. You know, we build a physical house. We build our house in the sense of we do some work.

If you're doing business, those people, those days, they didn't work in offices and factories. They worked in the fields to build a house and to earn money. If the Lord doesn't bless your business, you're wasting your time.

If the Lord doesn't bless your family, you're wasting your time trying to build it. Depend on the Lord. The Lord and the labor in vain who build it.

I've always, I do a little business myself, done it for more than 30 years to support my family. And I've always said, Lord, your work will always be first in my life. There are times when I've traveled out in the Lord's work, as a result of which I have lost many thousands of rupees, once 80,000 rupees, because I was not here to deal with a particular transaction that needed to be done at that time.

And I said, that's fine. Your work is more important to me than any amount of money. Money will never be important to me.

God's working. God's tested me on that. I'll tell you.

I went for a conference and I, somewhere in India, somewhere, and I came back and I discovered, oh, I lost so much money. That's fine. I said, Lord, why didn't you allow that testing? And by the way, the Lord said, didn't you pray the other day you wanted to be free from the love of money? Oh, that's why.

Thank you. Thank you, Lord. That's okay.

You're answering my prayer. The Lord tested me without allowing me to know what is the result of my visit to that place, to see whether I'd be just happy that I served the Lord, even if I got nothing for it. One and a half years later, when I was at another place, two brothers came up to me and said, Brother Zak, do you remember when you came for that conference, that place? I said, yes, I remember that very well.

I didn't tell them why. And they said, we got saved in that conference. Oh, I said, praise the Lord.

Was that worth 80,000 rupees? Tell me, would you pay 40,000 rupees to take one person to heaven? But the Lord did not allow me to know that for one and a half years to see whether I would just rejoice in him

and not even rejoice in souls being saved. I said, Lord, you're my, you're my joy. I thank God for the lessons he's taught me.

The Lord builds the house and I will not put my business first at any time, never. And I'll tell you this, I'm not starved. My children have not starved.

God's taken care of me and my family because I decided I'm going to build the Lord's house and he'll build mine. He's waiting for you to rise up early, to retire late, like all these businessmen around the world work hard and all that. You need to get some sleep.

It says in verse two, God gives us sleep. And I'll tell you something else. If you have a good conscience, that's the best pillow to sleep on.

If you find it difficult to sleep, try it. Try this medicine, good conscience. Go to bed with a good conscience and get very good sleep.

I was looking on the internet once, you know, and I saw there against my name, help to sleep. I said, help to sleep? Is that good? And I went to that site. It's a site which describes all types of medicines for people who have sleep problems.

You know, Google search picks up everything. And one of the things written there was one person said, I find that I get the best sleep if I put my headphones on and listen to Brother Zack's messages. They give me a pleasant sleep when I go to bed.

I said, great. It's God's word, not my word, really. Then it speaks about family life.

That's the other home we have to build. Children, verse three, are the gift of the Lord. Look at every child you get as a gift of the Lord, boy or girl.

In India, unfortunately, we have a preference for boys. But girls are also the gift of the Lord. Don't forget.

The fruit of the womb is his reward. And we must make our children, listen to this, verse four, like arrows. Every child of ours must be like an arrow that we're going to fling at the devil.

I'll tell you something. You can't keep that bow and arrow in the bow forever. You've got to let it go.

Some parents are so clingy to their children. Don't leave us alone. We're getting older.

Please take care of us. Let them go. Let them go and fire away at the enemy.

God will take care of you. Don't worry. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior.

I've learned to release my children long ago because I want them to fight the devil, and I want to go and keep on holding them. What do you do with an arrow in your bow? Fire it. So are the children of one's youth.

How blessed is the man who has such a quiver. They will not be ashamed when they speak to their enemies. 128 speaks on like that about the home.

How blessed is the man who fears the Lord. His home will be like a, his wife will be like a fruitful wine. Children like olive plants.

You know, to have children who fear the Lord is a wonderful thing. If you're a man who fears God, you should long that all your children should fear God as well. Number one, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

It's no use teaching them English ABC if you don't teach them spiritual ABC, the fear of the Lord. If you don't teach them from childhood to honor their parents, to speak respectfully to dad and mom, and to speak respectfully to every older person, and to stop speaking evil of other people in the church, etc. Teach them the fear of the Lord and you'll be blessed.

You'll have them sitting around your table fearing the Lord themselves. And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem and see your children's children. Verse six.

We go to Psalm 129. It seems as though in following this ascending path to the Lord's, the Lord's highway. It is a high way in the sense that it goes higher and higher and higher all the time.

Persecution never stops. I don't believe persecution is going to stop for me or for our church, no matter how far we progress. There'll always be somebody who's jealous.

Most of the persecution is because people are jealous that God's blessing you in some way. They're jealous of you. There are numerous people who are jealous of God's servants and jealous of a church that God is blessing.

And it's jealousy that provokes them to persecution. Even Pilate could recognize when the Pharisees brought Jesus. These guys are jealous of this man's ministry.

That's why they're trying to tear him apart. That happens. It's happened.

It's been the fate of every true servant of God. But you can ignore it because God will be a helper. Many times they persecuted me.

Yeah, many times for my youth, but they never prevail against me. And we have even wonderful promise in Romans 8 28. God will make everything work for our good.

He'll never prevail. It'll work for my good. The Lord will cut the cords of the wicked, verse 4. And he will deal with all those who hate Zion.

We don't have to do anything. The Lord will deal with them. And so on.

Let's go to Psalm 130. Another thing that we never stop in our ascending path is, Lord, keep me from sinning. Like Mother Teresa said, temptation is like fire.

Temptation is like fire. Even if you're 100 years old, it can burn you. I've never heard a better definition of the danger of temptation than that.

You're 100 years old, it can burn you. Watch, watch. So we need to cry out and say, Lord, hear my voice, be attentive.

If you mark iniquities, Lord, there's forgiveness with you, verse 4, that you may be feared. Why does God forgive us? So that we fear him. He doesn't forgive us so that we can play the fool with sin.

No. It's one of the most important verses in forgiveness in the whole Bible. Why does God forgive us? He forgives us so that we may fear him even more.

So please remember that the next time you ask God for forgiveness, in the early stages of our Christian life, we ask God for forgiveness because we want to go to heaven. But as we grow on, go on to the Lord, we ask for forgiveness and we say, Lord, let this forgiveness make me fear you some more than I've ever feared you before. Do you pray like that? On the ascending path, that's how we pray.

And I wait for the Lord. And I wait for the Lord more than watchman for the morning. It's also waiting for the Lord's return.

When I read about the terrible things happening in the world around me, I say, Lord, come Lord Jesus. When I see poor children being exploited, when I see young girls being kidnapped for prostitution, I say, Lord Jesus, come. When I see unrighteous, ungodly people flourishing and, you know, wicked people harassing the righteous, I say, Lord Jesus, come.

I believe we should be praying that prayer, the last prayer in the Bible. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchman waits for the morning.

Psalms 131. A good warning as we go higher and higher and higher, a big danger is pride. Many of you have been in the church here 25, 30 years.

You know what your danger is? You can begin to think now, I'm a senior brother. Uh-huh. I'm not like these young fellows who joined yesterday.

I'm a senior brother and senior sister. That'll be your doom. Do you remember those people who came to work at six o'clock in the morning? And when the time came for wages and the master gave, you know, this Matthew 20, he paid the fellows who came and worked for one hour.

Do you know what their words were? How can you make us equal to these people who came one hour ago? Is there any of that spirit in you? How can you make me a senior brother who's been in CFC for 25, 30 years equal to this fellow who came yesterday? How can you give him a ministry when I've been here 30 years? It's because of that attitude that God will never give you a ministry even in a hundred years. Say, Lord, my heart is not proud. I don't want to involve myself in matters too great for me or things too difficult for me.

Many people put their heads into things that don't concern them at all. Don't be a busybody in other people's affairs. We need that warning even when you reach near the top.

Lord, I don't want to be a busybody in other people's affairs. I don't want to have another person's ministry. I want to be satisfied with the ministry you gave me.

I want to be satisfied in the circle in which you put me. I want to stay within that boundary like a weaned child. We need to be like a weaned child.

You know, when a child has been on his mother's breast, baby, drinking, drinking, and drinking, then you try to take away that child from the mother's breast to feed it solid food. In the beginning, it's a bit restless and cries for this mother's breast again, mother's milk, and finally it comes to rest. Have you come to rest? Are you one of those restless people like a weaned child rests against his mother without being restless?

My soul is like that.

I trust in the Lord. Psalm 132. Here we speak about, see about David's burden to build the house of God.

Remember, O Lord, David's behalf is affliction. How he swore to God. Listen to this and think of it as building the church.

He's talking about people who have ascended this high and who are saying, Lord, my burden is to build the church. I will not enter my house. I will not lie on my bed.

I will not give sleep to my eyes until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place to build the church. That's my burden. O Lord, don't turn away your face from me, anointed.

Verse 10, help me to build your church. Because that is verse 13, where the Lord has chosen for his dwelling place. Today, the Lord has chosen the church to be his dwelling place, where his resting place is forever.

I don't know how many of you have that burden. I remember reading many years ago, this word in Ephesians 5, 25, Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. I say, Lord, I want to love the church and give myself for it until my last breath.

No matter how much pain, inconvenience, sickness, anything, I will give myself to build the church and I will not seek anything in return. Because that's how you gave yourself. That's what it means to follow Jesus.

Ask God to give you a burden like that. Psalm 133, and in the church, how good and how pleasant it is. See, we're ascending near the top now.

We're almost reached the top. Brethren dwelling together in unity. Unity, fellowship, not uniformity.

Uniformity means, you know, like school uniform, everybody looks alike, military uniform, everybody's alike. We behave alike, we talk alike. No, no, no, no.

That's computerized robots. We are all different. We're all different.

You and your wife will be different. You and your co-workers will be different. But there's not uniformity.

It's unity. There may be many areas where we are different, but we're united. Husband and wife are united.

Brother and brother united. Sister and sister united. Are you striving for this unity in your home, in the church? Because it is there, verse three, that the Lord commands the blessing.

It's in the place of unity where two or three are gathered in my name and they agree together. They shall ask for anything. It'll be granted them by my father.

And finally, what is the ultimate purpose of God? I'll tell you. To make us worshipers, ultimately, for Psalm 134. To stand day and night for all eternity.

Raise our hands in submission. It's an expression of submission and trust. Lord, I trust in you.

I submit to you. I lift up my hands to worship the Lord, to bless him. Bless the Lord means to worship him.

Revelation 22, it says, his servants will worship him, and serve him. The ultimate purpose of God is to make us worshipers. Jesus said that to the woman of Samaria.

The father is seeking all over the world for those who will worship him in spirit and truth. It's like the father's searching, searching. When I read that verse, I said, dad, please find me as one of those whom you're searching for.

I don't want to be a preacher. I want to be a worshiper. Believe me, brothers and sisters, a lot of people think of me as a preacher.

You may think of me like that. I don't want God to think of me like that. I want God to think of me as a worshiper.

That's what I want to be any day. I'm determined to be a worshiper. Even if I lose my gift of preaching.

I'll say if I become dumb or can't speak. It's okay. Nobody can stop me from being a worshiper, because I don't need to open my mouth to be a worshiper.

I don't need to have speaking ability or anything. Some of you who envy others, oh, I wish I could speak like that. I wish I could do that.

What's stopping you from being a worshiper? That's the greatest thing you can be on this earth. That's the ultimate height. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray that you will help each one of us as we climb this hill by the mighty power of God as we go up and up and up. Help us never to backslide. Help us to press on so that we shall see you with joy when you arrive and not be ashamed when you come.

So many temptations around us to be sidetracked. Protect us. Preserve us along this path.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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