

# The Word of the Cross Tests People

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the coming of Christ and purifying ourselves as He is pure through cooperation with God and making a choice to live a life of purity and holiness.*

**Duration:** 1:03:07

**Scripture:** 1 John 2:19

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of embracing the message of the cross, which involves dying to self daily and following Jesus wholeheartedly. It warns about the presence of antichrists who oppose this message and the need to abide in Christ to be ready for His return. The speaker highlights the division caused by the message of the cross, leading some to boldly embrace it and others to shrink away in shame. The urgency of the last hour and the significance of choosing the way of the cross are emphasized to prepare believers for the coming of Christ.

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## Transcript

In the last few Sundays, we've been seeing some of the things that are going to take place before Christ comes again. We considered the Great Tribulation, we considered deception that's going to also take place in great extent, false signs and wonders. See, these are things we got to take seriously because if we don't take it seriously, the time will suddenly come and we won't be ready for it.

Think of the flood that came to Chennai where people lost such a lot of their stuff. Supposing there had been a warning one week earlier, there's going to be a flood and people didn't bother about it. Then they'd had themselves to blame for losing what things they should have stored more carefully.

That's an example of how multitudes of Christians, born-again Christians, are not going to be ready when difficult times come and will not even be ready for the coming of the Lord. Please remember, when Jesus comes, there are going to be two types of believers. We read that in 1 John 2:28. It says, little children abide in him so that when he appears, we may have boldness before him.

That's one group of people who are going to have tremendous boldness when he comes because their lives are in order. They're ready to meet him. They are bold.

And then there's another group that's going to shrink away in shame when he comes. Both these groups were warned about the dangers that are going to be there before Christ comes again and how one should prepare oneself. But one group took it seriously and prepared themselves.

The other group was laid back and said, well, we're okay. Nothing serious is going to happen to us. The other ones, when the Lord actually comes, they're going to shrink away in shame.

And I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, it's quite likely that right in our midst, there are going to be two groups when Christ comes again. Those who boldly say, praise the Lord, you've come. We're waiting for you, Lord.

We are ready. And others who are going to shrink away in shame, believe me, it's going to happen. And if you don't believe me, you'll see it happen in that day when it comes.

Some whom you knew in CFC, shrink away in shame because they did not take the word they heard seriously. It's very important. And it tells us here, right in this passage, how we can be in that group that's bold when he comes.

Just see further down, just three, four verses down. Verse two, the last part, we know that when he appears, chapter three, sorry, chapter three, verse two, we shall be like him because we see him as he is. Like I've often said, most Christians have got only one hope.

He will come again. We have two. He will come again.

We will see him and we will be like him when he comes again. That part, that second important part, most Christians don't think about. They don't think about in practical terms.

I mean, if you ask them, do you believe that you'll be like Christ when he comes again? They say, yeah. What are you going to do about it now? They say nothing. When he comes, he'll just make us like him.

Is that true? See what scripture says. All the foolishness and stupidity among believers is because they don't read the word of God exactly as it is. There is only one book, as I've often said, that God has given that reveals his will.

And he has also said, you know, Isaiah 55, verse eight and nine, my ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. And I believe it should be a lifelong passion to align our way of thinking with God's way of thinking.

And the only way to align my way of thinking with God's way of thinking is by reading the scriptures. The more I've studied the scriptures, the more I had to get rid of my way of thinking and begin to think the way God thinks. And the reason for a lot of anxiety and fear in the lives of believers is because they don't align their way of thinking to God's way of thinking.

Why is it that God is never worried, never anxious, never afraid? Because he thinks in a certain way. Why is it we are anxious and afraid and fearful? Because we don't think in that way. The one reason God's given us the Bible is to make us think the way God thinks.

And the more we read scripture and the more we understand God's mind, the more we will understand God's way. I'll give you one example. There are people who read the Old Testament and say, why did a loving God ask the Israelites to kill all the Canaanites? Is that an act of love? Remember, God looks at all

of creation.

Now, would you know, by the way, if somebody asked you that question, would you be able to give an answer? You say God is a God of love. Why do we read in the Old Testament that he had to wipe out all the Canaanites, including the children? Why was that? You know, when you come across things like this, and you don't know the answer, you have to say, Lord, I have to acknowledge that my way of thinking is still far removed from your way of thinking, even though I've been a believer so many years. And the reason very often is when I read something like that, I don't even bother to think, why did God do that? Whenever we read the scriptures, we must ask ourselves, why did God do like that? Then we align our mind with God's way of thinking.

So the reason for that is, I say, I can take an example. If you see a surgeon cutting off somebody's leg, cutting off his foot, let's say, or part of his leg, in an operating theater, would you believe that as an act of love? I mean, if you understood a little bit of health, you'd understand. But otherwise, if you don't know it, I mean, if an illiterate man sees a surgeon cutting off somebody's leg, you'd say, this guy probably hates him.

He's unconscious, and he's cutting off his leg. But it's medically required sometimes for a leg to be cut off, because it's so full of gangrene that got in there through diabetes or something like that. And there was no way to cure it.

And if the doctor left that leg there, it would infect the whole body and kill the person. So out of love for that person, the doctor cuts off that leg. If a patient knows that he's intelligent enough, he'll ask the doctor to cut off his leg.

So when God looks at humanity, he looks at all humanity as those whom he created. Remember, Christ died for everyone. He died for the sins of the whole world.

Those who receive it get forgiveness. So God's love for everyone, even those Canaanites or anybody, is so great that he sent his son to die for them. But when a person has opened themselves to the devil so much, to demonic influences, like those people were doing, and they open themselves to such a lot of evil.

And if you read scripture further, you read that in the time of Abraham, in Genesis 15, it says that God waited more than 400 years, actually 430 years, more than 400 years. He said, I'm going to wait. He told Abraham, I'm not going to allow your children to occupy this land of Canaan now because the sin of the Amorites has not yet come to fullness.

I'm waiting, I'm waiting, I'm waiting. I'm waiting to see if they'll repent and give up their sin. But they didn't give up their sin.

You read that, the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. That means the cup of sin had not come to the top. He waited, waited, waited, waited, waited, waited, waited 400 years.

And then he said, there's no way now. We've got to cut off the leg. We've got to cut off this group of people because if the Israelites go in here, the whole nation of Israel will be corrupt.

Even the children were demon possessed and they were doing all types of things, evil things, all types of sexual evil. And God said, the only way to protect Israel through whom I have to send my son one day is to cut them off. That's the reason.

You read, for example, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you know that God waited a long time? It was evil, even in a time when Lot moved there to settle down. But he waited, he waited, he waited, waited.

Finally, it's like the cup overflowed. Then God cut it off. In the days of Noah, we read that God waited, he waited.

He waited 120 years for them to listen to Noah's preaching. And they did not turn. They rejected, rejected, made fun of him, made fun of him, rejected, rejected, lived in their sin, violence, and sex.

Finally, God said, I'm going to cut it off. I'm going to cut off that leg so that the rest of humanity, which is in those days just Noah's family, could be preserved. Just like that surgeon cuts off a gangrenous leg.

That's just, I'm trying to explain to you, when you understand God's mind, you see there's a reason behind everything. And so the things you read in the scripture, you don't understand. You just say to yourself, my mind has not yet come to understand the way God thinks.

And that's why I don't understand it. But it is still true. That's what I found in every situation.

So here is a verse like that. A lot of people think we will be like him when he comes. That's fine.

I don't have to do anything about it. It's not true. Because it says in the next verse, 1 John 3 verse 3, and this is how we can be in that group that will be bold when he comes.

And I want all of you to be bold. I don't want a single person sitting here today to be in that second group of those who are shrink back in shame when he comes. I hope that won't happen to any of you.

It'll be terrible. Believe me, it'll be really terrible. Far more than I can explain.

Everyone, there's no exception, 1 John 3 verse 3, who has this hope. And the hope is not just that I will see Jesus face to face. No, that's half the hope.

The other half is, I will be like him. 1 John 3 verse 2. The two things I mentioned there. I'll see him as he is, and I will be like him.

Remember always that's our double hope. The two parts to that hope, like two sides of a coin. And because I will see him as he is and become like him, God says, if you're serious about that, if you really have this as your hope, you will purify yourself to the level of Christ's purity as he is pure.

And that is why we stress that in our church. There are very few churches in the world that stress it. I'll tell you that.

If you don't believe me, go and watch the internet. All these television evangelists and other preachers. Or go to other churches and see how much they stress purifying yourselves as he is pure.

Sometimes people make fun of us saying, oh you're just a bunch of people purifying yourself all the time. I say, well that's exactly what 1 John 3 verse 3 tells us to do. We're not peculiar.

I mean we may be different from others because others don't obey the scripture. But that's exactly what says everyone who has this hope. I have this hope that I shall see him as he is and I shall be like him.

And so what should I do? The Holy Spirit says, purify yourself as he is pure. Don't ask the Lord to purify you. He'll do that.

It says God works in us but we got to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It's a cooperation. God is the one who shows us what's wrong in us.

Gives us the power to overcome what's wrong in us. But if we don't respond, he's not going to treat us like the planets. Just automatically make us obey him for thousands of years.

The difference between those planets and us is that he gives us a choice. This is what's good for you. He tells the planets it's good for you to keep going in that orbit.

They do it because they don't have a choice. He tells us it's good for you to go like this but he gives us a choice. Do you want to go or not? That's the difference between the planets and human beings.

He will never force us to go in a certain way because then we'll be robots. He gives us freedom of choice and I want to tell you something. He'll never take it away.

Even when we get to heaven in eternity, we will have freedom of choice because the moment God takes away freedom of choice, I become like a planet. Automatic obedience like a robot. But why is it that when I get to heaven, I will never sin? Because that freedom of choice has been so purified in my earthly life that I'll be like Jesus.

That with complete freedom to sin, I'll never sin. I mean we are beginning to taste that even now. In little things like you have freedom to cheat in your office and make a little more money and you don't do it and everybody else is doing it.

That's a little step. You allow that type of attitude to come into every area of your life where you don't do what your flesh tells you to do. I mean in the area of cheating in the office like the other people do, that may be a relatively easy area because we know it's wrong to take money which doesn't belong to me.

It's not right to take office money or somebody else's money which doesn't belong to me. But you have to make the same choice when you're tempted to get angry. Exactly the same choice.

All other people just lose their temper at any little thing in the home and you say, just like you say I'm not going to cheat in the office, I'm not going to get angry. I don't care if my wife gets angry or my husband gets angry or anybody else gets angry. I don't care if my neighbor gets angry.

I don't care if the auto rickshaw driver gets angry or the porter in the railway station gets angry. I am not going to get angry because the bible says put away all anger. It's a choice.

All through life we have a choice to purify ourselves as he is pure. You can ask God for help. You can say Lord I have a terrific problem with my temper and when I'm tempted in these difficult situations in the world I want you to help me.

That he'll do. But in that moment if he leaves it to you to choose, you can cry out in a quiet prayer, Lord help me right now I'm slipping and he'll help you. It is grace to help us in our time of need.

We can't keep ourselves from falling. It's the Lord who keeps us but it's not automatic. We don't boast that we got victory over sin.

No. Jesus keeps us from falling but he will not keep you from falling the way he keeps the planets rotating. He always waits to see if you will let him.

You remember that word in Revelation 3 20. I stand at the door and knock. Why does he have to knock? He's almighty God.

He can blast that door and come right into your heart without your permission. Why does he have to say I stand at the door and knock? If any man open the door I will come in. Imagine the almighty God waiting for your permission to enter into your life.

That is the dignity with which he treats us human beings. I will not violate your free will and that's the reason brothers and sisters why we sin so much because we got a free will and if you realize that God's way is the best for you in that moment of temptation. If you cry out to God and say Lord give me grace now keep me from falling.

I don't have the strength but keep me from falling. You'll be amazed to see what God will do for you in the moment of temptation. Ask for grace.

That is the way to purify yourself as he is pure and this message is not something that everybody likes. Let me turn you to John chapter 6. I mean one would think that we would love purity. Let me first turn you to John chapter 5. You know when Jesus came to the pool of Bethesda it says there was a great multitude of people there in verse 3 sick, blind, lame, withered waiting for the moving of the water because an angel would come and stir the water once in a while and whoever stepped in first would be healed and there was a man verse 5 who'd been there for 38 years in sickness and see the question in verse 6 that Jesus asks him.

You think it's a ridiculous question to go and ask a sick man do you want to get well. Can you imagine going in a hospital and going to every bed and asking do you want to get well and somebody says no. I cannot imagine.

It's a ridiculous question. Does Jesus ask ridiculous questions? No. I've come to see that the Lord has a lot more wisdom than I have.

I mean if I went to that pool of Bethesda I'd never ask anybody do you want to get well. God says your ways are not my ways and I humble myself and say Lord I'm not like you. I don't have the wisdom you have.

I'm so foolish that I'll never ask that question but a wise God asked that question and I see the reason for it. That man lying there for 38 years is a picture of man living under the law. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 2 verse 14 that the children of Israel wandered for 38 years in the wilderness after they came to the border of the promised land the first time.

Two years after they crossed the Red Sea the Lord brought them to a place called Kadesh Barnea at the border and told Moses go in possess the land and they sent the spies and the spies said too many giants. That was two years after they left Egypt. God said okay you don't obey me then wander for the next 38 years became a total of 40 years.

So that wandering with of 38 years was not necessary. I learned from that that two years after you're born again you can come into a life of victory if you're wholehearted. Of course you can take 40 years also

that's up to you but God's plan is in two years you can enter the land of victory.

That's what I learned from Deuteronomy chapter 2 verse 14. In two years a child learns to walk steadily on its feet. In two years we should be able to walk in victory over sin, conscious sin as we have light on sin.

But we don't. Many years and the Lord has to come and ask us do you really want to be free from sin? That's the meaning of this question. Do you want to get well? I believe he's asking everyone here who's been a slave to anger, slave to bitterness for many years.

If you've been a believer more than two years more than two years and you're still defeated by conscious sin again and again and again and again and again. Don't say Jesus can't keep you from falling. What Jesus is asking you is do you really want to get well? Are you quite happy with this sickness? That's the meaning of this question.

It's a very powerful question that the Lord asks for people who are defeated. What does it mean to live under the law? To live under the law is to struggle to please God in our own strength. I put it like that.

You see under the law they didn't have the power of the Holy Spirit. They didn't have grace but they were given commandments and one of the toughest commandments was the 10th commandment. Don't ever lust after your neighbor's wife or neighbor's daughter.

In other words don't lust after any woman in the world because everybody is your neighbor's wife or neighbor's daughter. That was impossible. Nine commandments they could keep.

Don't worship idols, don't tell lies, don't commit adultery, don't murder. All that they could keep but when it came to the 10th commandment they couldn't keep it and God kept it there for one reason. I never understood it before.

You know a lot of things you understand in scripture only if you really begin to seek God and say, Lord why did you make that 10th commandment so tough which nobody could keep? Why did you even give it to them when you knew nobody could keep it? The answer I got was the Lord wanted to see how many of these people will be honest to say, Lord I can't keep it. I can keep the nine. The Lord asked, do you want to get well? Do you want to keep the 10th commandment as well? And there are a few, very few who say yes Lord at any cost.

I never want to lust after a woman in my whole life. I never want to get angry even once in 365 days of the year. Do you want to be sick for one day of the year? How many of you want to be sick for one day in a year? I don't see any hands.

Okay, you're sensible people. How many of you want to sin for one day in a year? 364 days you live holy but one day you just sin. Do you want it? Some people don't take it seriously.

I mean you would say no because you know that's the right answer. But what about in your daily life? Do you have that attitude? Do you have that attitude, Lord I just don't want to and I want to know how to overcome this. That's the question the Lord asked.

Do you want to get well? So the Lord calls us to a life of purity and that's why in the new covenant he gives us the Holy Spirit and grace which they didn't have under the old covenant. So I'll come to John chapter 6 in a moment. I'm going to show you Romans 7 first.

In Romans 7 the Apostle Paul was a man who kept the whole law by the common understanding among the Jewish people was keeping the whole law means keep nine commandments. Everybody knew nobody can keep the tenth commandment. You shall not desire.

Desire, that's the word. You shall not covet. It's a hard thing.

The other nine commandments are all external. One commandment alone was inward and whenever the Jewish people said we kept the law when Philippians 3 Paul says I was righteous according to the law blameless. He says in Acts 23 when all my life I have lived with a good conscience.

What does he mean? I kept nine commandments because that's all they understood even when the Lord told the rich young ruler when you get time you read it in Mark chapter 10. He said the rich young ruler came to Jesus and said how can I get eternal life and Jesus said keep the commandments and he listed the commandments. Jesus listed the commandments and he left out the tenth commandment.

Have you noticed that? He didn't include the tenth commandment because he knew nobody could keep it. He came up to the ninth commandment and stopped but there was a man Paul who wanted to keep the tenth commandment. That's why he became the man of God that he became and that's how you can become the man of woman of God and God wants you to be.

See Romans 7 and the last part of verse 7. I would not have known about coveting or lusting as my margin says if it were not that the law said in the tenth commandment you shall not lust. Covet and lust are the same thing. If you got a margin in your bible it says the same thing.

You shall not lust after your neighbor's wife. You shall not lust after your neighbor's daughter. You shall not lust to have something that your neighbor has his house or his property or his spiritual gift or anything.

Do you have a lust to have the same preaching gift that somebody else has? That is a disobedience to the tenth commandment. You shall not lust to be able to do something that somebody else can do. Somebody else can play an instrument well and you lust that you could do that yourself usually for honor.

It's a sin. You shall not covet anything that's your neighbor's. You shall not covet that you shall be as good-looking as somebody else or as intelligent as somebody else.

Anything is a lust. How many people keep this commandment? How many people are honest enough to say Lord I'm not keeping it but to honest enough to say I'm not keeping it. I think all of us would say but the Lord asked do you want to get well? That apparently foolish question is exactly what the Lord is asking all of us this morning.

Do you want to get well? Do you want to keep the tenth commandment or not? It's my standard. God says okay. Paul says yes.

I saw this law which said I kept all the nine commandments and the other Jews did not take it seriously but I took it seriously Lord. I'm not keeping this ten commandments. There must be a reason why you said you shall not lust and it says your sin taking opportunity through the commandment.

That means as long as I was ignorant of that lusting is a sin I was okay. Yeah I'm lusting but that's not a sin. There are many people who have even written to me saying in our church we were taught that anger is not a sin.

Well so you can't blame a student if the teacher taught them two plus two was five. What do you do? All the children in the class believe two plus two is five because the teacher taught them that two plus two is five. So there are some churches where they say anger is not a sin.

You can't blame them. They all believe that. I mean they've got a bible.

If they want to read it they could read it and know but it says here but when the law came it produced in me lusting of every kind. Look at the honesty of the apostle Paul. I began to lust after women.

I began to lust after this person's daughter and that person's wife. Can you imagine Paul lusting after somebody's wife? Lusting of every kind. I lusted for the property that person had and this person's money.

I wish I had that and that person's good looks. Lusting of every kind and when he saw that this commandment which is supposed to bring life in me produced death. Verse 10.

And sin deceived me. Verse 11. And killed me.

The law is holy and then his cry is verse 24. Wretched man that I am. Who will set me free from this lusting body.

Look at the cry and he says thanks be to God through Jesus Christ. That is why Paul came to a life of victory. He was dead in earnest about obeying what God had said in the 10th commandment.

In the New Testament there are many other commandments. Rejoice in the Lord always. Very few believers take that as a commandment and that if they don't rejoice in the Lord anytime in the day, not in their circumstances.

We are never told to rejoice in our circumstances. Never, never, never. That's unrealistic.

Rejoice in the Lord in who he is, in your relationship with him always and let that triumph over your circumstances. And there are people who don't do that. There are so many people who grumble and complain.

You can't be grumbling and complaining and rejoicing in the Lord at the same time. But they don't even take it seriously. That's a bad thing.

It's sad. I mean at least if they took it seriously it'd be something. But they don't even take it seriously.

They're not purifying themselves as Christ is pure. They're not going to be ready for the Lord's coming. A lot of people think our standard is too high.

But everything we teach, there's a verse in scripture for it. If you think the standard is too high, it's like the child who spent all his life in a rotten old school where he learned 2 plus 2 was 5. And it doesn't matter if you get your problems wrong. He goes to another school where the standard is strict and says we don't accept 2 plus 2 is 5, sorry.

We accept only 2 plus 2 is 4. And he thinks that school is unreasonable. Because all the other schools accept 2 plus 2 is 5. Why is this school teaching 2 plus 2 is 4? That's the way some people look at our church, I'll tell you that. I remember one person who came to our church and said, Brother Jack, your standards are too high in this church.

I can't be in this church. I said, show me anything we teach which is not in scripture. Then say our standard is too high.

But if you say the standard of scripture is too high, that's your choice. Then there are many other churches here. You can go and sit there and rot away.

That's up to you. But we're not going to preach anything than the whole counsel of God. The whole counsel of God, even if people get offended and go away, that's fine.

But because Paul took the stand, see what he says in Romans 8. I experienced something. Because I hungered to keep the 10th commandment. Romans 8, the law of the Holy Spirit, not the law of Moses.

The law of Moses was 10 commandments. It could not help me to keep that 10th commandment. But the law of the Holy Spirit, which is the life of Jesus Christ.

The law of the Holy Spirit is not 10,000 commandments. It's a life, a life. That life came into me.

It set me free from this lusting law of sin. He actually experienced keeping the 10th commandment by the life of Jesus. That kept him pure.

Jesus kept him from falling. And it says what the law could not do. Verse three, because it is weak, because of my flesh.

It could not help me to keep that 10th commandment. God did it. He sent his son.

And now, who first died for me, and condemned sin was judged in his flesh. In order that, verse four, this requirement of the law, what is the requirement of the law? You shall not lust. Remember, read it in the context of Romans 7 and verse 7. This requirement of the law in Romans 7, 7, you shall not lust, can be fulfilled in us.

Because today we don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Holy Spirit. That means in the moment of temptation, walking is a step by step, left, right, left, right. We walk and as we walk, the flesh tells me to go this way, and the spirit tells me to go that way.

And I choose the way the spirit describes, and ask for grace to go that way. And I'm free. The requirement of the law is fulfilled in us.

Many godly people have experienced this. It's a small percentage, because very few find the narrow way that walks, leads to life. But I want to say that this is the way God wants you to walk, my brother, sister.

It'll change your life, it'll change your family life, it'll change everything in your life, as it did mine. But you've got to be desperate. It says Jesus prayed with loud crying and tears to be saved from sin.

I have prayed like that in my life. The years I was defeated, saying, oh God, save me from sin. I never want to fall into any of these sins.

And even today, I say, Lord, give me light on areas in my life where there may be selfishness, there may be pride. Please give me light. You know, even when I sit in the Wednesday meetings, when I sit there listening to a lot of young brothers and sisters speak, I'm sitting there judging myself.

I say, Lord, you can speak to me through that 24-year-old brother, why not? Or that 25-year-old sister. I want to hear. I want to hear God.

I don't care who He gives me light through. It's a blessing. I mean, it doesn't matter if a young brother comes to me and says, Brother Zach, there's a black mark on your face, some charcoal or something.

I don't get upset with him and say, how dare you 25-year-old tell me that there's a charcoal mark on my face. I'm not so stupid. I say, thank you so much.

You're so kind to tell me that. I didn't realize it. I want to wipe it off.

Take that attitude towards every brother and sister. And I guarantee you, as I've experienced in my life, you will progress with leaps and bounds in your spiritual life. Don't ever think you're so big that you can't receive an exaltation from a younger brother.

We're not, none of us is so big. We're all weak members of the body of Christ that need one another. And through the years, I have not only preached about the body of Christ, I have practiced it.

I really believe that I need every member of the body of Christ. And I value all of them. I even value godly people in other churches who don't quite often agree with me, but they are godly.

I value them. So, when we take this stand in our church and seek to purify ourselves as Christ is pure and seek to lead people to this height, there are people who are going to get offended with us. And there are people who will tell all types of lies about us.

There are people who will speak evil of us. Well, that's another opportunity to overcome sin, to bless them, to love them, and pray for them. And not to get upset.

Never get upset. I mean, if you find your, when somebody's talking to you about a controversial subject, and you're greatly tempted to get upset, of course, you can pray to God for help, but you can also change the subject. That's what I sometimes do.

You've heard me say that. When somebody comes to argue with me about a doctrine, I change the subject. I say, let's talk about cricket.

Shall we talk about cricket for some time? You want the Indian team to win. I also want the Indian team to win. We're on the right side.

We are together here. I mean, some of the doctrines, you may not agree with me, it doesn't matter. Because I'm not interested in getting into a controversy with someone.

See, so often we get into arguments, which you can easily avoid. Even at home, don't get into an argument with your wife or husband or anybody. Just steer clear of it.

Change the subject. Talk about something you both are happy to talk about. Good food or something like that.

Change the subject and seek for peace. The Bible says we must run after peace. It's a great verse in 1 Peter 4, which says, pursue peace, seek after it, run after it.

And the picture when I, you know, I always read the Bible with pictures in my mind. It helps me. So when I read the word pursue peace in 1 Peter 4, run after peace, I get the picture of my trying to catch a bus, which has just left the bus stop.

If I sit back lazily, I'll miss it. I'm going to run after it to get on that. That's the way I got to run after peace in some situations.

Run after peace. Wherever you find conflict with a brother or sister, run after it. And if they get offended and go away, say, God bless you, brother.

We don't wish you evil. And there are people who got offended with what we teach in our church and have left. We don't wish any evil for them.

We don't. We wish the best for them. But I've seen through the years that when people go away with that wrong spirit, very quickly, they go down a slippery slope of missing out on God's best.

I've seen it again and again and again. Not because we are better than anyone, but because if you have a wrong attitude, you sit here with the wrong attitude, it'll go badly with you here. So in John chapter six, I find that Jesus, when he preached certain things, people got offended and left him.

So this is not new. In John chapter six, as long as he was doing miracles, you know, it says here in verse two, a great multitude was following him. And there, we know that that great multitude consisted of 5,000 men who ate the bread of Eros.

Verse 10, last part, the men sat down in number about 5,000. And if you include the women and children, they're probably about 10,000. Great multitude followed him and they all ate the loaves and fish.

And then Jesus said to them, verse 27, a word which all of us need to hear. Don't just work for the food which perishes, but work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give to you. To all of you who have secular jobs, I want to say to you, don't just work for food that perishes.

We have to work. The Bible says, if you don't work, you shouldn't eat. In second Thessalonians three.

So we have to work, but don't just be taken up with working so hard to earn money for your family, which is needed. Think also of working for the food which endures to eternal life. See, he didn't say you don't have to work for it.

Don't work for the food which perishes, but that means work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give you. Are you working for the food that will give you eternal life? Are you really seeking to know God to eternal life? Jesus defined eternal life in John 17 three as knowing God and knowing Jesus Christ. And the only way to know God as I see it is through the scriptures, reading the scriptures and obeying them.

Do you know that eating good food alone will not make you healthy? That food has got to be digested. If you eat food and vomit it out, you'll never become healthy. If you eat food and it is digested, that digested food makes you healthy and strong.

It's like that. You read God's word, it will not make you spiritual. How do you digest God's word? By obedience.

God's word plus obedience is like eating food plus digestion. Eating food without digestion is like reading God's word and not obeying it. That's the main reason why many people don't become spiritual.

They're eating food regularly. They have plenty of food on Sunday morning, but they don't digest it. They don't take it serious to obey what they hear.

You know, people have an indigestion problem. It's a terrible thing and gradually they become thin and they can even die. It's what happens spiritually too.

So work for the food which endures to eternal life. And then he told them about, further down he says here, verse 53. There's a long sermon he gave them.

Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no eternal life. This is the food that endures to eternal life. What is the food that endures to eternal life? Verse 54, he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

What does that mean? To eat his flesh and drink his blood. We testify to the symbol of that in the breaking of bread. The bread and the cup, that's a symbol that I am eating of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.

In other words, see when Jesus talks about his blood, it always speaks about death, his death on the cross. And when I have to eat of that, it means I have to die with him. That is why Jesus said, if you want to follow me, you have to die every day.

You have to take up your cross every day, Luke 9, 23, and follow me. That is what he's meaning here. Eating my flesh and drinking my blood, that's the way to eternal life.

In other words, the way of the cross is the way to eternal life. And he who walks this way, verse 56, will abide in me and I in him. Now, many who heard this, verse 60, not the Pharisees.

If the Pharisees got offended with it, I can understand. You know, nominal Christians get offended with what we preach in this church, I can understand. But many of his disciples, verse 60, when they heard this, they said, this is a difficult thing.

Who can listen to it? Who can listen to this matter of dying to myself every day, in every situation? It's too tough. But Jesus realized that some people grumbled at this. He said, does this cause you to stumble? And then he went on to say, he didn't say, oh, don't get offended.

He said, I know one thing, verse 65, no one can come to me unless it has been granted him by my Father. That's a very humbling verse for me anyway. I can sometimes foolishly think that's because I'm so earnest and sincere that I found a place in CFC to hear the truth, unlike so many who've gone to other churches where they don't hear the truth.

No, brother, sister, the Father granted it to you. Humble yourself and say, it's not my earnestness or my zeal, the Father granted it to me. And that's why I hear and I'm willing to listen to things that offend a lot of other people.

Why is it you guys are not offended? At least not till today. Why is it that you're still here? The Father has given you some grace. Because it says, others, verse 66, as a result of this, many of his disciples, his disciples withdrew, did not walk with him anymore.

You know, there is a point up to which Christian teaching people will follow. You must be upright. A lot of people will follow that.

You mustn't cheat. You mustn't tell lies. You must love everybody.

You mustn't fight with people. You must be good to others. Many, many good things.

But when you go beyond that to following Jesus, where you have to bear his reproach, and you're put outside the camp, when you teach everything in the Bible, not just all the main things, but everything, then people get offended and go. It could be a small thing sometimes that makes a person stumble. It may not, doesn't have to be a big rock.

Give me a small little stone. I remember in my son, Sandeep's church, when he started it in California some years ago, among many other areas of obedience, I mean many, many major areas of obedience that he preached exactly like we preach here, he also preached a very small thing. That when a sister prays or shares the word, she must veil her head.

Very simple thing. Because, not because he felt like it, we said 1 Corinthians 11 says that. Half the church left.

I mean the church is very small there, maybe 15-20 people, half of them left. Because those sisters didn't believe in covering their heads. Those American sisters, most American churches, the women don't cover their heads.

It's just a practice there. I told Sandeep, boy, I said, you're a son after my own heart. You're a man after my own heart.

You let everybody else go. I said, I couldn't care less. You stick to God's word and God will build a church that will honor him, that will shut the mouth of the devil.

I'm more interested in shutting the mouth of the devil than getting a crowd over here. And sure enough, God added a lot more other people who were willing to obey. I'm just giving you an example of how a small thing can make people go away.

It doesn't have to be a big thing. Sometimes it's a big thing. Some people don't like to hear, you got to take up the cross every day, every day, every day.

Can you believe this? That one young brother and sister who were here for a number of years in our church quite some time ago, who left us now, said to me, they're half my age, younger than my youngest son. Brother Zach, do you know that we do not have to take up the cross every day? Jesus said that when he was on earth, but those days are over. Now it says in Galatians 5.24, they are teaching me, you know, those who are Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.

It's finished. Now we are free. I'd like to see what happens to their life in another five or six years.

Mark my words. The way of the cross, they are clever, by the way, they are clever all postgraduates and all that. We have a problem with clever people.

The God has hidden the truth from the clever and the intelligent unless they are willing to be like babes. I tell you, a lot of people who have a lot of intelligence, if they don't become like babes, they'll be confused.

Here you find it's because of the teaching of the way of the cross.

You've got to eat my flesh and drink my blood. Otherwise you have no life in you. You have no life in you, he said.

And they got offended and they withdrew and they would not walk with him anymore. And he did not go after any of them. Many people have left our church exactly like that and almost exactly for the same reason.

And like Jesus, I've never gone after any of them. If I see them anywhere, I say, hello, how are you? And my only question is, I hope you're following Jesus. I never asked them to come back.

Never. They go away, they go away. One day, if they reach the level of the pigs, like the prodigal son, and they come to their senses, it says the prodigal son, when he came to the level of his pigs, you read this word in Luke 15, he came to his senses.

Have you read that? And then he decided to come back. I say, when people come to their senses, come back, they're welcome. If they come back in repentance.

But we don't go after them. We go after sheep that went astray because they were deceived or accidentally missed the way. Those we'd go after, like the shepherd.

But the son who says, I know, dad, I know what, what is the right way. You don't have to teach me. Walks off.

That's the second story in Luke 15. His father never went after the son. Have you noticed that shepherd went after the sheep, the lost sheep, but the father never went after the lost son.

These are two different types of backsliders. One went astray because he was sincere, but he was ignorant and he got deceived by some doctrine. We'd love to teach them to show them the way back.

But the one who goes in rebellion, like the son, said, dad, don't try and teach me. I know how to take care of myself. You know, there are young people like that even today, who think their fathers are all dumb and say, you don't have to teach me.

I know how to do things. Father never went after him. But I tell my fellow elders, don't go after these rebellious people.

Let them go. Some of them may never come back. Okay.

It's up to them. They had the opportunity to hear the truth. They should make, make a choice.

Like Jesus said, someone greater than Solomon is here, but you people don't listen to him. He said about himself, Jesus is greater than Solomon. When Solomon, the queen of Sheba came from such a great distance to hear his wisdom and hear Jesus says, I'm right here, greater than Solomon.

And you don't listen. Well, then there's no hope for you. He once told one town, there's more hope for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you.

He told a town in Israel because they didn't, Sodom didn't have a Bible. They didn't have a godly man coming there and preaching and you people have that. So the Lord doesn't go after people.

The rich young ruler said, no, I can't sell all that I have. He said, okay, goodbye. Go.

Somebody else said, I've got to go and bury my father first. He said, go. Whenever people wanted to leave Jesus, he always said, go.

And then, when now people left and there were 12 left, he turned to them and said, do you also want to go? He didn't say, Hey, I hope you people won't leave me. And everybody else is leaving. No, there was a dignity about Jesus Christ.

You want to go? You can go. I'm not going to hold on to any of you. You know why Simon Peter became the man of God that he became despite his weakness? Because he said to Jesus, Lord, to whom shall we go? Verse 68.

These words, the way of death to self, are the words of eternal life. And it's those who say that, who stay with us and who will be ready for the Lord's coming. 1 John chapter 2. I showed you that verse about people who shrink away in shame.

I want to show you an earlier verse in the same chapter. 1 John chapter 2, verse 18. Children, it is the last hour.

We are pretty close, he says. 1,900 years ago, he said, we are close to the coming of Christ. If it was the last hour, then where are we? We are at 1159.

And maybe 30, 45 seconds after 1159. We're pretty close. We're in the last minute, in the last few seconds, if it was the last hour, 1,900 years ago.

And just as you heard that an Antichrist is coming up, there are many, many Antichrists, even now. That means people with that spirit of the Antichrist. Antichrist means against Christ.

That's all it means. There's one big Antichrist who's going to come once, but there are many against Christ. That means against his teaching that you must take up the cross every day.

If you're against that, whether you know it or not, you're a mini Antichrist. If you resist, like that young couple said, oh, we don't believe we should take up the cross every day. They don't realize it.

It's a mini against Christ who said that you can't follow me unless you take up the cross every day. It's a very serious thing. I often thought when I thought of that young couple, one of them was even born here, grew up here.

I said, how in the world did they come to this condition? Only one reason, pride. They were both clever young people, well-educated. Pride got to their head that they thought they knew more than their teachers, more than other godly men.

And that's against Christ. Even now, many against the message of Christ have risen. That is another indication that we are nearing the end, the last hour.

And listen to this, verse 19, they went out from us because they didn't really belong to us. Because those who belong to us have chosen the way of the cross. Wholeheartedly.

But they went out and if they had been of us, if they really deep down in their heart had been gripped by the message of the cross, they were part of us, they would have remained with us. They would never have gone away. But they went out in order that it might be shown that they are not all of us.

Think of that. He's talking about in Jesus, in John chapter 6, it is the way of the cross, the message of the cross of death to self that brought the division in that day. And it's the same thing that brought the division in John's time.

Now I want to ask another question. Why is it in so many churches, people who are against the message of the cross still sit there. They don't go away.

Because there is no fiery man like John, the apostle here, to preach to them. In those days, there was a guy called John who preached the strong message of the cross. He was the last of the apostles.

Because he was there, these antichrists got offended and left. But when a man like John's not there, the message gets toned down and it's no longer the strong message of the cross, then the antichrists sit there. And it's after that he says, little children, verse 28, abide in him.

Because when he comes again, some will respond boldly and say, Lord, we're waiting for you, we're ready for you. Because everything is set right in their life. And there are others who will shrink away, because there are things in their life, they now discover in the light of God, that light that will shine in that day when Christ comes, that they had rejected the truth in the days they heard it in the church.

These are serious warnings. I mean, I don't delight in warning people. I'll tell you that I'd much rather give a message of encouragement, where everybody goes and say, wasn't that a great message? We were really blessed today.

I feel so encouraged and so uplifted. I tell you, I'd rather preach that 52 Sundays of the year. But I have to be faithful to God.

I'm a servant of God. And I have to preach that once in a while. And also preach that which is good for us.

Let's bow in prayer. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, please help us all to be wise, to be alert, to understand the times in which we live, to be aware of the spirit of the antichrist that rejects the way of the cross and chooses the way of the world. Please help us to be wise, everyone here, Lord.

It would be absolutely a tragedy if someone sitting here today heard all this and missed out in the final day. Let it not happen. Please help us all to be alert.

Pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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