

Let us pray and we will pray,

*Lord, touch my ears that we might hear Your voice. Father, speak to us. We need a Word from You, we need to learn Your ways, we need to understand Your thoughts, we need to receive Your strength for this is a walk of faith. All the power and money of this earth will not work because we are fighting an unseen enemy; we need faith, we need a Word from You. Today, I pray, Father, You will help us to put aside everything else. All the problems and worries with which we have come, the aches and the pains in our body, we put it all away and we pray; give us hearing ears, a mind that understands, a heart that believes and a will that is surrendered to Your will. Speak Father. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.*

So, we have come together once again as God's people, God's servants and we are going through difficult times. One of the good things about this, unlike old days, anything that happens in any part of the country, you get to know immediately. Persecution cannot be hidden anymore and it is increasing. But God says, "Don't forget where you are seated." We are seated in Christ. We are called to walk in the newness of life and we are called to take a stand in the power and strength of God. What we are going through in this nation; nothing new to the Church. Two thousand years the Church is going through this and all the writers warned the Church to be prepared and Peter will say this in *1 Peter 4:12-13*,

### **1 Peter 4:12-13**

***<sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup> but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.***

Fiery trials; it's not a strange thing; it should be a usual thing. We should not be surprised when these things happen. Scripture says, "You are sharing in this suffering of Jesus Christ." What our Master suffered, His servants cannot be exempt from it. If we are exempt from His suffering, then there is something wrong with my ministry and your ministry. In three weeks' time, it will be Resurrection Sunday. That is the greatest event in human history – the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, because when He rose from the dead, He broke the power of sin, He broke the power of death and He broke the power of the devil. That is the message that we have to pass on to every man, woman and child. You don't have to be a slave to sin anymore, you don't have to fear of death anymore and you don't have to fear the power of darkness anymore. There is a message of freedom, "*Whom the Son sets free is free indeed.*" That is the Gospel message but that Gospel message is almost lost now. We are changing the message but if we change the message, it is not good news. What is the Good News? What Jesus did on the Cross, what Jesus did by rising from the dead.

*The wages of sin is death*; that will not change. Sin leads to death. In English, we say, cause and effect. The wages of sin is death, sin will lead to death and then, there is an executioner; there is a fellow who will hang Him. Imagine a guy caught for murder. The wages of sin is death. He has killed somebody. The judge says, "He should be hanged," and there is a man who hangs him. Sin, punishment and the fellow who hanged. Jesus took care of all three; the cost-sin, punishment-death and the hangman whose name is the devil. *Hebrews 2:14* says this way,

### **Hebrews 2:14**

***<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,***

Did you see? 'Apwaadi' (devil) had the power of death. He is looking around to see who sins because he knew God's law. Wages of sin is death and he has the power of death. Jesus took care of all three. That's good news; sin taken care of, death has taken care of, devil has been taken care of. Man can walk with a holy God once again. Salvation is about one person; the person of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a plan; it is about Jesus Christ. The salvation message is about Jesus Christ and this person has to be lifted up. If we lift Him up, then only salvation will take place. From the Day of Pentecost, *Acts 2:36*, this is exactly what happened. Peter lifted Jesus up. What did he say?

**Acts 2:36**

**<sup>36</sup> “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”**

The Gospel is first being preached to the house of Israel and Christ is lifted up because the message is about a Person because everybody will have to deal with Jesus one day in life. Islam can exist without Mohammad; they only need the Quran. In the Quran, Mohammad is only mentioned four times; fifth time, he is called ‘Ahmed’. So, Islam can continue without Mohammad. Hinduism can continue without any of the gods. It’s a set of teachings. Buddhism can continue without Buddha. Christianity cannot continue one day without Christ, this is not possible because it is the message about the life, the death, the resurrection of one person; never change it. The Gospel is the Gospel of what Jesus did. It is not about His teachings. The teachings come only to the people who have received His works in their lives. Those who haven’t received Him and His works into their lives, the teachings make no difference. Christianity is not a set of teachings; it is about the life of Christ and a Christian is somebody who is replacing his life with the life of Christ. Not his teachings with Christ’s teachings but his life with Christ’s life. So, every time we gather, we lift Him up. We lift Him up; He will do His work; Christ will do His work. So, remember, this is the season, don’t forget to preach about the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This book, the Bible, it’s full of questions. First question asked by the devil, second question asked by God. So, you see this book is full of questions the devil asks, God asks, believers ask, unbelievers ask. The first question God asks, we all know that: “Where are you?” First question God asked is the question to man, “Adam, Adam, where are you?” First question in the Old Testament. First question in the New Testament it is reversed, *Matthew 2:2*,

**Matthew 2:2**

**<sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”**

First question by God, “Man, where are you?” First question in the New Testament: Man asking God, “Where are You?” That’s where the answers come; God seeking man and four hundred years of silence between Malachi and the New Testament – four hundred years of silence. Man is seeking God. Bible is full of questions. Job will ask a very important question, “If a man dies, will he live again?” The rich young ruler will ask an important question, “How do I inherit eternal life?” Jesus asked another question, “What profit does it to a man if he earns the whole world and loses his soul?” Paul asked a question, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” The writer of *Hebrews* asked another question, “How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?” Use pens like this: where ever you see questions, mark it. Questions are very interesting in the Bible. Only when we have a question, we will look for an answer. But of all the hundreds of questions in the Bible asked by God, the devil, believers, unbelievers; most important question for all of us; every man will have to give an answer to that question was asked by an unbeliever; Pilate a Roman. This is a question he asked in *Matthew 27:22*,

**Matthew 27:22**

**<sup>22</sup> Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”**

“What shall I do with Jesus?” Everyone sitting here will have to answer that question; it’s a personal question. It’s not, “What shall we do?” I have to ask, “What shall I do with Jesus?” Every person will have to answer that question. If you don’t, now in this life, when we stand before God, He will ask us, “What did you do with My Son? What did you do with Jesus?” Because God’s answer to man’s problem is His Son. God has no other answers. For everything you and I go through He has one answer, “Jesus Christ.” So, we have to ask this question, very personal question, “What shall I do with Jesus?”

See, God gives us the freedom to choose, He gives us the freedom. Moses said, “I set before you life and death, choose life.” Joshua said, “Choose this day whom you will serve.” Elijah said, “If Yahweh is God, follow Yahweh. If Baal is God, follow God; choose.” And God puts His Son before humanity and asks us, “What will you do with My Son?” For us believers, that’s our major issue. One side, we feel very comforted. Jesus says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you, I’ll be with you till the very end.” That is very comforting, also troublesome. If He’s with me all the time, then what will I do with Him? If He’s with

you and you brought Him with you then how come you are sleeping? Jesus is looking at you and saying, “What will I do with you?”

It's interesting because you see, there are preachers and evangelists in every religion; every religion has evangelists. There are Muslim preachers all around the world. You know what they say? “Follow Islam.” They don't say, “Choose.” Preachers of Hinduism will say, “Follow the path of Hinduism,” they don't say, “Choose this God.” Buddhist preachers, they preach about Buddhism, they don't say, “Choose Buddha.” Every Christian preacher has to say, “Choose Christ.” Understand the difference. He who has the Son, has life. If you don't have the Son, have all His teachings and follow His teachings, you still do not have life. So, the question is not, “What do I do with the teachings of Jesus Christ?” the question is, “What do I do with Jesus?” And for two thousand years, people are struggling with this question. “What will I do with Jesus?” Pilate is the first one to ask this question in the Bible. He represents a set of people. He represents a set of people who have power; power over other people. It could be a king, a president, a prime minister, governors, police officers; these are people with power and they have been given power to protect the people, to guard the innocent. Pilate knows Jesus is innocent. Three times, he goes to the people and their leader and says, “I find no fault in Him.” When you are in a seat of power and you have authority and you know somebody is innocent, you don't have to ask anybody, “What should I do with the innocent one?” Because judgment should be in righteousness. But if in your heart, you love your power more than righteousness, then you will pervert justice. Two thousand years, tens and thousands of leaders who have perverted justice; they know Christ is innocent, they know their followers are innocent yet they have chosen to go with the people and not with justice, because they love power more than justice. So, what will he do? He will hand over Jesus to be flogged and to be crucified. *Mark 15:15* says,

**Mark 15:15**

***<sup>15</sup>So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.***

“Pilate wanting to gratify the crowd.” So, you will see all these pictures – one poor pastor being beaten by the people and the police standing there watching because they want to please the crowd. Jesus is true till today but ask ourselves to please the crowd, do we pervert justice? Do we change the Word of God? Because we want to please the crowd. You have to take it down to the different, different levels. What we may do to please the crowds? Are we crowd-pleasers? That's the first question he asks. “What do I do with this Man, Jesus?” He knows He is innocent, he knows He's true but then, the crowd is there and the crowd is buying for His blood and he wants to please the crowds. Whenever we want to please the crowds, remember, we are in danger of perverting God's righteousness. So, people in authority, for two thousand years, have always persecuted God's people and in India too. Why? Because Christians are a very soft target. You judge a Muslim, they will fight back. In Sri Lanka, there is an emergency now. Why? Because you touched a Buddhist and there were riots and government has put emergency. See, Buddhism is supposed to be a passive religion, non-violent religion but it doesn't work. But if you touch Christians since two thousand years, rarely, you will hear them fighting back because it's not following a religion; it's following a Person who said, “When this happens to you, you will not fight back. You will follow My example.” Jesus did not just teach, he set forth an example and Christians are called to follow that example. And in every place for two thousand years, they use the same excuse. What is that? Conversion. What is that? Why were the high priests and all angry with Jesus? Because the people were leaving them and were converting them to Jesus. Nothing is new; for two thousand years, it is the same thing.

This country, I have freedom; I have the freedom to buy anything, wear anything, sing anything, watch anything and the Supreme Court said, “If you are an adult, you can marry anybody.” One thing – if you want to choose Christ, I have to meet the Collector, I have to meet the Magistrate and get permission; I have freedom for everything else except to choose Christ. We have freedom for everything, because that is called the free market; you can choose. You have the money, you choose. Buy whatever you have which can afford. One thing you don't have to choose; you don't have the freedom to choose Christ and when you choose, Scripture says, Jesus says, “These will follow.” Then, there are authorities, sworn in to protect the innocent, uphold justice but they are like Pilot, to gratify the crowd, will not do anything to defend the innocent and will allow His people to be scourged and to be beaten. There are many who react like this. We have to ask ourselves: “How do we react?” One day, they will all have to answer this question.

Can I have that video, so that you will all wake up? This is not the time to sleep; this is the time to pray, this is the time to awake. When you see this, don't get angry; then, you are reacting wrongly. This was warned, this was told this will happen and He also taught us; how do we react when these things happen. Why do these things happen? Because of that question, "What will I do with Jesus?" First set is like pilot; they want to please the crowd and they will pervert righteousness. Then there is a second set represented by Herod. Herod is another one. Jesus was brought to him too. In *Luke 23:8*, Scripture says,

**Luke 23:8**

***<sup>8</sup> Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.***

They are very interested, they want to signs. They are excited about a spectacle. They are not interested in His person; they are interested to see what they can get from Him. If in our Churches, we are gathering crowds because we have created something in them, 'what you can get from God,' we are at fault. And then, when the day of trouble comes. they are not able to stand.

And there are others. O, Herod longed to see Jesus Christ; Jesus would never go to him. Now, He has been arrested and brought to him and he was hoping that He would do a sign. Why do we go to Jesus? You will see many, many people like that in the Bible. They go to Jesus only to see what they can get from Him. You may receive a sign, but if that is all that you came for, remember *verse 9*, Scripture says,

**Luke 23:9**

***<sup>9</sup> Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.***

He did not speak to him. Jesus does not speak. If we are not going for Jesus, He is not going to speak to us. Listen, we have to have the answer to this question, "What will I do with this Jesus?" Do you want just a sign or do you want Him to speak to you? If He speaks to you, then you have a solution to your problem. There was a man with a problem; thirty-eight years he lay like that and there was no solution. One day, Jesus came; he did not know who He was. Jesus asked him a question, "Do you want to be made whole?" He said many things, "Nobody helps me; somebody gets in," Jesus said, "Do you want get healed? Pick up your mat, go!" He picked up his mat and went. What is interesting, from there, he did not know Jesus; he received a sign without asking for it, he went in the temple to worship and Jesus found him there. Jesus had a Word for him. Jesus speaks to those who go beyond the sign. There are many who receive a sign but they reject the person of Christ.

Recently, they discovered one of Gandhi's lost letters; one week back. Gandhi's reply to a Pastor, "I respect Jesus, I respect Him as a great teacher but I don't believe what you say." What will you do with Jesus? Believing that He is a great teacher is going to change your life? When you stand before God one day, you are going to tell, "Well, I believed Your Son was a great teacher"? See, everybody struggles with this question, "What will you do with Jesus?" That's why Jesus asked this question, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say I am?" They said, "Some say you are John the Baptist." Those who heard His preaching must have said, "He sounds like John." "Repent for the Kingdom of God is near!" Others who saw His miracles, they said, "O, He is like Elijah." Some others must have heard Him praying, they must have said, "He is like Jeremiah." All that makes no difference to salvation; so, He asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter said, "You are Jesus, Son of God." What shall I do with Jesus?

See, this is our problem; if we make Jesus as our teacher, we will study His teachings. When I went to school, when I went to college, I had many teachers. I learnt what they taught. Their life never changed me; the teacher's life doesn't have to change his students. Jesus is not a teacher; He is not just a teacher. He is a miracle worker but He is bigger than that. See, John the Baptist's message troubles me; troubled many people but John himself troubled nobody. Elijah troubled many people because his message was uncompromising but Elijah's life did not trouble anybody. But Christ troubles everybody; His life troubles. See, when I look at Elijah, I feel comfortable comforted. He also was depressed, John also was depressed Jeremiah was depressed; I am depressed. So, it is okay. When you look at Jesus, what do you say? His life challenges us. And then. He turns around and says, "This is the life I have come to offer you; life that overcomes." John did not say, "Follow me." Elijah did not say, "Follow me," actually, Elijah said to Elisha, "Don't follow me." But John said, "Follow Him." We have

to follow Him. There is no point in admiring Jesus' teaching, His power, His signs and rejecting the person of Jesus. So, the question: What will I do with Jesus? Because everyone has to make that choice in this life because eternity will be decided by that one answer.

So, there is Pilot; representing one group, there is Herod; representing another group and then there is the third group; third group is the crowd, the mob we saw in the video. We should feel sorry for them. They actually are ignorant like that mob on Jesus' day but they were incited by the leaders. Look to the crowd in *Matthew 27:20*,

**Matthew 27:20**

***<sup>20</sup> But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.***

Mobs can be easily persuaded, can be easily moved by the leaders because mobs don't think; they have left the thinking to the leaders. Don't create a Church like that. Get a Church where you teach people to think. Teach them the Word; teach them to think and make decisions according to the Word. Let me ask you this question: You saw the video? It's been happening for years; only it has increased in great tempo in the past years. Everybody knows this; all Christians know about this. Yet, let me ask you. Nagaland is 98% Christian, but who won in the election? The same people. How did they win? Because the leaders are sold out to them. It's not the people; it is the leaders. Leaders are only after power; they are not for righteousness, they are not for Christ, they are not for His Kingdom. They don't care; whichever side power is they will switch over to that side. Therefore, the most shameful leaders in India, are not Hindu leaders, are not Muslim leaders, but Christian leaders. They can be bought and they all know it. Meghalaya is majority Christian. Who is ruling there? Same people. Last week's election. Why? The mob; mob will be persuaded by the leaders. What are they persuaded? To replace Jesus with Barabbas; replace one with the other and it is the same today. The Saviour has been replaced by somebody else or something else in the Churches. Have you replaced Christ? Have you change the message of the day of Pentecost? What is that Peter stood up and said on the day of Pentecost? *Acts 2:36*,

**Acts 2:36**

***<sup>36</sup> "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."***

Have you replaced Christ? Is He the Lord of our life? Is He the Lord of our home? Is He the Lord of our children? Christian parents sitting here, is He the Lord? We have replaced education as a Lord instead of Christ. For many Christian parents, education is an idol. We will say, "We don't worship Saraswati," but if you look at the way you deal with your children, from morning till evening, worship, worship education because we have replaced Christ. And then, when they go to the world, they go the world's way. When Daniel went into the world, he also was educated but that is not what he was taught. What he was taught first, was a lordship of Yahweh. So, when he went into the world, his first choice is, "How do I honour God?" We should be educated. Our children should be learned but we don't replace Christ with anything in their life. Men, have you replaced Christ in your homes? Because most men tell their wives, "Listen to me," it is not listen to Christ. Wives have replaced Christ in their lives. What do they say, "Listen to me." Everywhere, pastors have replaced Christ in the Church. "Listen to me." It is not, "Listen to Him." See, we are very scared of this Word. We don't have to be scared; we don't have to be scared of leading people to Christ. We are afraid; that's why we don't teach. We will give them two or three things and keep them dependent on us and say, "Listen to me, listen to me."

Anything and everything that replaces Christ in our lives is a Barabbas. Who is Barabbas? He's a murderer. What does it mean? If we replace Christ with Barabbas, it will bring death in your life. Christ came to give life; Barabbas is a murderer. So, there is a third group; a large group who are forever replacing Christ with somebody else or with something else. Have you replaced? That's why the question: What will I do with this Jesus? So, there is Pilot, there is Herod and there is the mob; the crowd; three groups of people. Then there is the fourth one; these are the soldiers. Listen to these soldiers in *Matthew 27:27-31*,

**Matthew 27:27-31**

***<sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. <sup>28</sup> And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. <sup>29</sup> When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the***

**Jews!"<sup>30</sup> Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.<sup>31</sup> And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.**

They mocked him. Today, Christ is mocked and scoffed every day. Christ is mocked, Christians are mocked. Christ is mocked not so much in this country. It's interesting: Christ is mocked every day in old Christian countries; Christ is mocked. If you go to America, if you go to Europe, you watch the TV programs; Christ is always mocked. They will never dare to mock Mohammed, they will never mock any Hindu god; they mock Christ every day. Till today, if you look at one of the major newspapers in the US and one of the major ladies who speaks; America has a Vice President; he is a very godly man. He prays, speak in tongues. So, you know what he said? If Jesus speaks to him and he speaks in tongues, then he is mental, on TV, on the largest networks, about the Vice President. Christ is mocked every day, Christians are mocked every day and Jesus said it and Peter warned that as the last days come closer and closer that scoffers will come in the last days,

### **2 Peter 3:3**

**<sup>3</sup> knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,**

Scoffers will come and there is this mocking of Christianity taking place and mocking of Christ. If you believe in Jesus and if you believe this is the Word of God, this is the inspired Word of God, this cannot change, this is what I believe in; they will mock you.

So, you see, there is this fourth crowd. Christ is mocked, Christians are mocked, Christian values are mocked and God says, "Be prepared for this," because we are being prepared. When these things happen, it's the answer to the question: What will you do with Jesus?

Then, there is this fifth group represented by Judas and the other disciples; they will deny Jesus. Judas will sell Jesus and Peter will deny Jesus. These two have been happening for 2000 years. One of the reasons Jesus allows persecution, is to purify the Church. When persecution happens; it will separate those who believe in Jesus and those who follow Christianity. Teachings can always be changed but you cannot change Christ; so, He allows. We saw the video but we don't know how many of them came back to Church after that. Millions have fallen away in the past two thousand years when persecution has taken place.

### **1 Peter 4:14-19**

**<sup>14</sup> If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. <sup>16</sup> Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. <sup>17</sup> For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" <sup>19</sup> Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.**

Judgement has to begin in the house of God. God doesn't like mixer; He wants purity and the only way the Church can be purified, is through persecution. Even gold is purified in fire. So, judgement doesn't begin in the world; judgement begins in the Church, in the house of God. So, judgement begins in the house of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God. It's the testing of our faith. Will our faith stand the test? Because in the world, we follow people because we look at gain or loss. Even pastors, I have heard pastors say, "It cost me ₹125/- to go, he gives me ₹100/-, ₹ 25/- loss; no point in going." That's how Judas followed Jesus. Judas understood what Jesus was saying; others did not. He understood, "His Kingdom is not going to come now. He really means what He says. He is going to die; there is no profit in following Him. So, let me make some profit out of this." So, he went to the Pharisees, "What will you give me if I had Him over to you? That's a testing of our faith and the sad thing is the Church is being taught everything in terms of loss and gain that, "You come to Jesus you will receive this, you will receive this; it is gain, gain, gain; all material gain." When persecution comes, what will happen to those people? How will they stand? Because they have only been taught in terms of gain; they were never taught in terms of loss. When Jesus said to follow Him, it meant complete loss in this life; complete gain in the other and the other is far away. Most people are like children. Children are told, "If you sit quietly for 10 minutes, I will give you one rupees. 10 minutes is so far away, it's not possible; it's not worth it. For other life, it's so far

away, who has seen it? Who knows what it is like? This life I know; I see. I want gain. If there is no gain in following Him, I am not following Him.”

So many will sell out Jesus, because they only see loss. That is what persecution does. Everybody will go to Church We are all Christians; we go we sit and worship, we fellowship, it's all fine. Then, persecution rises and beating starts and you start losing stuff. And then, you realise there is not much gain in this and then, people start falling away. That is Judas, who will sell Jesus. You can hear the teachings of Jesus; you can experience the power of teaching but never know Him. Judas never knew Him. Then there are others like Peter; that is fear. There are a lot of people who operate on fear. This is fearful and you have to handle fear every day and you prepare your mind always. That is what surrender means; surrender is unconditional. We don't set conditions before God. If there are conditions, then it is not surrender. We surrender unconditionally.

I'll tell you something; it's funny, it's not a joke but it's real, it's true. In my house where I live, all the toilet western. You know what a western toilet is? In my office, there is one toilet which is Indian; I use both to see that I never lose the habit of the Indian toilet. You know why? Because every prison in India has only Indian toilets; there are no Western toilets. So, you are prepared that when that day comes, it will not catch you by surprise, because if you put your hand on this plough, you promise you will not look back. So, there are many who operate by fear. We can excuse Peter because this was all before Pentecost. Pentecost changed everything; power of the Holy Spirit came, fear went. We have to deal with fear every day because we have to answer this question: What will you do with this Jesus? When will His demands end? Do you know when His demand will end over our life? Do you know when His demand ended over Abraham's life? When he had tied Isaac up and lifted his knife. God said, “It's over, no more demand, because there is nothing left now. All you have is my, therefore all I have is yours. History will call, ‘We are friends.’” What will you do with this Jesus? Ask this question.

I tell this is the most important question in the Bible. What will I do with Jesus? Because this has been the problem for 2000 years. Millions have fallen away. Persecution in the East, in China, persecution in North Africa; one side Church is growing another side Church shrinking. Why? Because you were never taught to stand in faith. This morning news in US Fox news, one of the news channels, Church in China is exploding and the government is scared. The governments are always scared of the Christians; real Christians. They are not scared of Muslims, because you know you can always fight. You see if he and I fight, you will know one will win; he will win because he is younger and stronger. So, the governments know, you can always fight those who fight. How do you find those who don't fight? They will be crying out to their God and their God moves. They are always afraid. Only if we react in spirit of the Word. I will tell you something, for pastors, when you pray, pray strategically.

Many years ago, in Africa men of God realized and they prayed this way. Africa is like this, they said, “Lord, draw a line with the blood of Jesus in the North and South of Africa.” South is Christian and North is Muslim. Pray strategically. I draw a line of blood across India, Karnataka, Andhra, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala you will never come to power, I pray. Pray strategically because our God moves to prayer, because to fight any battle, you need places of peace. That is how the devil also works. That's why God says, “Be angry, don't sin because if you sin, the devil gets a foothold and from there he fights in. So, to fight any battle, you need places of peace and we can pray. Pray strategically. We pray to God and He moves. Whatever people do; look at US, one and a half years ago, what happened? Everybody, every channel said, “That woman will win,” and if she had won, that would have been the end of US. She is, I don't want to say, but she is not for God, she is not for Christ, she is not for Christians. You know why he won? Only because the Church prayed. You know what they say now? In US history, there has never been a President who is so much for Christians like him. People don't even know whether he is a Christian; but he is for the Church. That's all we ask, leave us alone. We are not asking for favour; we don't want help, just leave us alone. We don't harm you; we bless this Nation. We are very small, less than 2% but you go to anywhere in India; the schools the colleges the hospitals, who built? The Christian community. Why do you attack us? Because of Christ? We have to pray strategically. Our God will move. The South has always been peaceful. We need to pray, “Lord continue that peace in the South,” because Christ desire is this; not that we escape testing but our faith should not fail. This is what Jesus tells Peter in *Luke 22:31-32*,

**Luke 22:31-32**

***<sup>31</sup> And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”***

Satan has asked you to be sifted and God will not say, “No.” He knows unless we are sifted, we will not grow strong but what is His prayer? His prayer is this – our faith should not fail and for our faith not to fail, our faith has to be rooted in the Word of God, our faith has to be rooted in the Person of God. That is His desire. Will we stand with Christ in His trials? Will we stand with Christ through our trials or will we fall away? Will our faith fail? See, when the tests come, you cannot, you have to be prepared much before it comes. Many people think, “When it comes, I will be prepared.” It doesn't work. We prepare for all this eventualities in our mind daily. If it comes we are ready; if it doesn't come, we glorify God but we are prepared. So, these things have to be here; otherwise, when trials come, we will fall away and the Bible says, “In the last days, before the Antichrist comes there will be a great falling away from the faith in *Thessalonians*,

### **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**

**<sup>3</sup> Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;**

It says that the falling away will come and the man of sin is revealed. It's very interesting. When you fall away, the man of sin is revealed. When Judas fell away, the man of sin in him was revealed. When Peter fell away, the man of sin in him was revealed; his original person started coming out, he started using obscene language. Whenever people fall away, the man of sin in them in them will be revealed. It's a very nice warning for us. It happens together; the falling away. How do I know I am falling away from the faith? Because the man of sin in me is being revealed. How do I know I am not falling away? I am growing in faith. I am growing in faith because the Christ in me is being revealed. Both are connected with the person. It is not how much Scripture you know; it's not talking about how many times you go to Church; when you are falling away, the Man of sin is revealed. When you are growing in faith, Christ is revealed, both will happen. That's what God is talking about. On that day, Peter the denied, Judas sold out. The lawlessness was revealed that Judas was a thief and Peter was a blasphemer. That's why the question: Will we stand or endure with Christ till the end? That's what Jesus meant in *Matthew 24:13*,

### **Matthew 24:13**

**<sup>13</sup> But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

Till the end of your life or till Jesus comes, he said, “You need to endure,” your faith is going to be tested, persecution is going to be allowed. When persecution comes, all of us will know if our faith is in this life or the other life. Then we will know, whether we have put our faith in this life or the coming life. If our faith is in the coming life, we will endure persecution because we know even death is victory but when we are not sure, we fall away. That's what Scripture is talking about. We need to endure till the end but along with that God has made an incredible promise. He says, “If you endure through the trials,” and stand with Christ, this is the promise He gives, “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials and I bestow upon you a Kingdom.” His trial; that is important; not our trials. Our trials should be only because we took the name of Jesus because everybody has problems. Problem has got nothing to do with religion but our problem is different. Our problem can come because we took the name of Christ and we say, “Christ said, therefore I can't. Christ said therefore I have to do,” and then it is His trials and we are standing with Him and He says, “You are those who continued with Me in My trials,” because lot of people, men; and women will say, “You know my husband was alcoholic. He beat me up every day, so when I go to heaven, God will give me a crown.” Who told you? There's nothing like that in the Bible. This is how God would do with the King and the Kingdom. Pastor steal money, they do all kind of things and finally the police catches them, “I am being persecuted.” “No, you are being penalized for stealing.” The biggest pastor in Singapore, who has been fined, was supposed to go to jail two weeks back. He was trying to escape in the boat, the police caught him and brought him back. Was he being persecuted? That is not persecution.

Persecution is this: “You have stood with Me in My trials and God says, “I will confirm upon you a Kingdom,” because these trials are only because of faith and faith in Christ. The question is: when this comes will we disown Him? Will our faith fail us? That's why we have to build our faith so that we have a faith that does not fail. That brings us to the last category of people. We can be a set of people who crucify Him or we can be a set of people who crown Him. We can reject Him or receive Him with His suffering. What will I do with Jesus? God has already decided what He is doing with Jesus. God has already done. Philippians 2 tells if we were to ask, “God what will You do with Jesus?” He will say, “This is what I will do.”

### **Philippians 2:9-11**



***<sup>9</sup>Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

This is what God has done with Jesus. The question is: What will I do with Jesus? And the believer faces this choice every moment, every day of his life and Jesus was preparing his disciples for that. The disciples are preparing us for that. That is why the epistles were written *Ephesians 1:4*,

**Ephesians 1:4**

***<sup>4</sup>just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,***

According to His will He has chosen us, to be holy and without blame before Him in love. This is possible only by crowning Christ in our lives. That's what Peter said, "He has made Him Lord and Saviour." There are a lot of older pastors there are younger pastors; there are young and old. I am telling the younger ones, when you grow older, it's difficult to change because the body is set. Body is growing weaker, the mind set it; is easier to change when you're young. We have a small school; small babies 5,6,7 years old. They are learning Psalm 119 by heart; you know 176 verses? You and I can't; this won't work but they will, they can. In the same way young pastors, you have a long way to go. It's going to get more and more difficult. The older pastors, most of them have run their race but your race is going to be more difficult. Start disciplining now, eat less, I am serious, eat less because if you eat too much you will be sleeping. Your body won't listen to you. Half a battle is, "Who is the boss, my body or me?" So, Jesus does not ask for your mind first, "No, I want your mind first." He talks about your body first, "Just offer your body as a living sacrifice," you have to remember you have to give your body over to the Lord.

The word promise is: Body for the Lord, the lord for the body. It's a promise; it's a real promise. How you take care of your body, really take care of your body? Because soon lunch will be there, let it be the best things in the world, control should be in your hands, control should always be in your hands. Reason why? Because have a king, we have a purpose to fulfil; to fulfil that purpose we need a body. See many of our sickness is because we eat unhealthy and then you eat unhealthy; you go for one meeting you eat this much, you go to another meeting you eat this much, you go to third meeting you eat this much; now you are ill and you say, "Lord I am being persecuted for serving you." God says, "No." God says, "I told you to fast and pray, not feast and pray." He didn't say. This has to be a discipline. When Jesus was with them, they didn't have to pray. Let me ask you this question: Imagine this is not pastor Naveen; this is Jesus. Imagine Jesus comes here and He is with us, do we have to pray? Do we have to fast? No. So, they came and told Jesus, "John's disciples are fasting and praying, you guys are always eating." Jesus said, "Because I am with them. The day will come when I will not be with them, then they will also fast." We are eating and drinking as if Jesus is with us. When we teach in the Church, one of the things we teach is this: When a child is born, see in us there are many, many desires, many emotions but the first desire in a child is hunger. The child doesn't know lust, the baby doesn't know anger, baby doesn't know sorrow. He will know this is all one day; only thing he knows is hunger. So the first thing you teach the child is, self-control with hunger. You teach him that, he will learn to apply it with other things as he grows up. Because self-control is neutral; it can be applied in any area but how do you start? You start it with food. If you are able to control how to eat you, have learnt the principle of self-control; you are able to control other things.

Did you see Daniel? He had control over his food, so he had control over everything else. These are fundamental truths. Do you know why Israel did not possess the Promised Land? Because they had no control over food, therefore they had no control over any of the other things. That's why as Pastors, we exercise control. Let people offer, that is out of their love, but the remote should be in our hands. Don't leave control because; suddenly we will realise these are all important things in this race because our God has already told, "Holy and blameless. I have chosen you in Christ." Holiness is something God works in us; don't try to be Holy, it's not possible. The only way you can be holy by getting closer to God; there is no other way. Holiness is passed as you get closer to God. Righteousness is practised; holiness is imparted. So, we have to deal with only those things which keep us away from God, we will get holy. Blamelessness is in our hands.

Every day we can choose to be blameless before God. That's how we Crown Him; that's what Peter said, "This Jesus whom you crucified, God has made him both Lord and Saviour." If He is my Lord, He saves me. This people don't understand.

Salvation is a process. Salvation will not take place; His lordship won't take place. Imagine my son, say he is 5 years old. There is this box, it is 15 kilos. He is trying to push, it's not moving. He wants to move it from here to there and I say, "I will move it." He says, "No I will do it," and he is trying, it's not moving. Finally, he says, "I give up, you move." What is first needed? Lordship. He has to transfer lordship to me then I will save him. Where there is no lordship, there is no salvation. You know why people are not being continuously saved? Because they are not receiving the lordship of Jesus in areas of life where the Holy Spirit is showing. That's what God is talking. We crown Him daily. When you wake up in the morning, the first question is: What will I do with Jesus today? Either He is Lord or I am Lord. Either He is Lord, if He is Lord, He will save me. If I am Lord, I will be pushing and nothing is moving. This is the battle we go through every day. Don't separate this; these go together. Jesus home we crucified, God has made both Lord and Saviour and we need more and more of the lordship of Jesus Christ. Days will get more and more difficult. All forces will join against Christians. Why? Because all forces joined against Christ. Look at Scripture *Luke 23:10-13*,

**Luke 23:10-13**

***<sup>10</sup> And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. <sup>11</sup> Then Herod, with his <sup>[a]</sup>men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. <sup>12</sup> That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.***

Did you see that? Let's go back. Chief priest and Scribes; who are they? Jews. Who are they standing with? Herod. Who is he? Edomite. Who are they standing with? Pilot- Gentile. Jew, Edomite and Gentile has come together against Christ. Till then Herod and Pilot were enemies. What does scripture say? "That very day Herod and Pilot became friends." Yesterday's enemies will become friends; unite against Christ. That is Scripture because Christ is the common enemy for all powers of darkness. Because even enemies will come together and unite against Christ. Because what is common about all these people? Pilot, Herod, chief priest, the rulers; what is common? They are all after power and the only threat they see to power, is Jesus Christ. Why? He says, "Go preach the Gospel of the Kingdom." Look earlier in *Mark 12:13*; you will see how people come together,

**Mark 12:13-17**

***<sup>13</sup> Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. <sup>14</sup> When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? <sup>15</sup> Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." <sup>16</sup> So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.***

Now, we'll go to verse 13. Who are coming together to Christ? Pharisees, Herodians. Who are Pharisees? Extremely against the Romans. Who are Herodians? Who are with the Romans. Pharisees and Herodians can't stand each other. Why are there together? To trap Jesus. So you will always see for power, people will unite against Christ and against His servants because it's about power. But we are not after power, we are after souls. We are after the lordship of Jesus Christ and there is a clash of kingdoms and they come and ask Him. First, they will use flattery, "Teacher, we know You are true; You care about no one. You don't regard people, any kind. You teach the way of God in truth. Now, one question: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?" See questions in the Bible. Pastors is it right to pay taxes? I am not saying if you have a job, I am saying paying taxes out of your offerings. I don't have a salary so I don't need to pay but the Income Tax rules says, "Pastors, Priests, Maulvis; if they get offerings above ₹50,000/- taxes have to be paid. So, they are asking Jesus, Jesus is asking us, "Is it lawful to pay taxes?" Jesus said, "Give me a note, whose picture is this?" They had Caesar, we have Gandhi. Gandhi represents India, Father of the Nation; represents a Government. So, God says, "Whose picture is this? Give to the Government what belongs to the Government." We struggle.

Why I am telling is: how to be on the safe side of persecution? Because how do we remain safe? They ask Him a question, "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?" He said, "Give Me one of your coins." He says, "Whose image is this?" They said, "Caesar's." "So you are carrying Caesar with you." We have to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. When it comes to Government, our responsibility to the Government in the Bible in the New Covenant is put in three words: Pray, obey, pay. Pray; *1 Timothy 2:1-3*,

**1 Timothy 2:1-3**

***<sup>1</sup> Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. <sup>3</sup> For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour,***

Paul is writing this to Timothy. He has been in many of the prisons and yet he is telling, “Pray for those in authority.”

Second – obey. *Romans 13:1-2,*

**Romans 13:1-2**

***<sup>1</sup> Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.***

Obey those in authority. Pray for those in authority.

Third thing – pay. *Romans 13:6-7,*

**Romans 13:6-7**

***<sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.***

Municipal Corporation, Municipal tax. State tax, GST, whatever T is there, we pay. Pray, obey, pay; God’s format. He doesn’t talk about praying and paying but He will change about obeying because every authority has been placed by God. So, God will tell us when to obey when not to obey. But general principle is very clear; you don’t fight with anybody. Even that man who is coming to read the meter is God’s minister; you have to pay him. Because you are poor, in the evening, use this long stick and put the wire there, and then say, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah!” It doesn’t work. The line man is coming every month and he takes ₹ 100/- from all these people. There are Christians also among them. God says, “You didn’t pay, you evaded taxes.” That’s right? That’s why this Question: What will I do with Jesus? To pray. Somebody will come who says, “Only white.” And we will say, “Only white,” and the deal is done, “Pray.” He has said, “Pray for the government, obey the government, pay what is due to the government.” We don’t steal. That is how we have this confidence, “Yes Lord, You will not forsake me, You will not leave me because I am not perfect but I have tried to be blameless in Your sight. I have tried to put things right, trying to be blameless.” Let Churches be established like that. There can be much delay, much tightening, but it is alright, for it is for His Name sake. That is what John says, “We left in His Name sake.” We shall be very careful with how we deal with money and now we will break for lunch. Don’t eat too much and fall asleep. Control. When you finish, come up. Exercise controlled discipline. Don’t wander around where I have to chase you like a principal chasing students to the classroom. Shall we pray?

**Closing Prayer:**

*Father, we just love you, Lord. Who are we, O Lord, that You are mindful of us? Who are we, Lord, that You chose us even before the foundation of this world, to be holy and be blameless? Teach us, Lord. Give us hearing ears. Teach us, Lord. Even today, as we break now for lunch, we thank You for Your love, thank You for Your provision. May You bless Your servants; bring us back to this hall safely. We surrender this time into Your hands. Let our fellowship also be blameless, O Lord. Thank You. Father. In Jesus’ Name we pray, Amen.*