

A Church That Gets God's Approval

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's approval and striving to present oneself as a workman approved to God, rather than just seeking His blessing.

Duration: 50:51

Scripture: Psalm 1:2, Jeremiah 3:15, Romans 8:13, 1 John 2:13

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and maturity in the Christian life, comparing it to the stages of childhood, youth, and fatherhood. It highlights the need to overcome sin, have a deep relationship with God, and become spiritual fathers and mothers who care for and shepherd others. The speaker encourages seeking God's approval over seeking worldly success, and stresses the significance of abiding in God's Word to overcome temptation and the evil one.

Transcript

Thank you very much for that welcome. There is no part of this body, our human body, that is independent of the others. No part, not even the heart.

And there is no part of the body of Christ that's independent of others. There's no part of this human body that does not serve the others and is served in return. We may think of the heart as the most important part of our body, pumping blood into the body.

If the heart stops, that's the end of our lives. But do you know that the heart could never function? The hand doesn't take the food, put it in the mouth. The teeth don't chew it.

The stomach doesn't digest it. The heart wouldn't function. So, the strongest member in our body is dependent on the weaker ones.

I've learned that through 57 years of being a believer. And I hope all of you will remember, especially anyone who's tempted to think a bit too much of himself, to realize that you are what you are, not only because of Jesus, our head, but because of the other members of the body who pray for you, probably without your knowledge. I know hundreds and probably thousands pray for me.

I don't even know them. But I know that's why I've been able to serve. I'll never forget that.

So, my subject today is the church that God can approve of. God's approval is not something that everybody seeks. God's blessing, everybody seeks.

I cannot think of any Christian who doesn't seek for God's blessing. But among all the millions of Christians who seek for God's blessing, there are only a few who seek for God's approval. Every church in the world seeks for God's blessing.

I'm sure this church has also sought God's blessing. And it's right. We cannot survive without God's blessing.

But I personally think there are very few churches, among all that I've traveled many countries in the last 50 years, that earnestly seek for God's approval and seek to find out what is it that we can do to get God's approval. So many people pray and fast, not for God's approval. It's usually for God's blessing.

We got to go beyond that, dear brothers and sisters, and seek for God's approval. Because when we stand before the Lord, it's not God's blessing alone that's going to make us happy. But if we can look back over our lives, I often do that, you know.

I use my imagination to think of the day when I would stand before my Savior, and He'll be on the throne, and He will, the Bible says, He's going to evaluate the lives of every single one of His children. Second Corinthians 5 says that, that whatever we have done in our body, we shall give an account to Him in that day. He will evaluate everything I did in my life, right from the time I was converted.

The times of my ignorance, He overlooks. But from the time He gave me light, according to the light I had, God would not judge. I was converted when I was 19 and a half, and God wouldn't judge my actions those days by the light I have today.

He would judge my actions those days by the light I had then. Today, He judges me by the light I have today, but He will evaluate me. And the evaluation will not be how many blessings I received from Him, but how much did I express my gratitude for what He did for me on the cross? How much have you expressed your gratitude to Jesus Christ for what He did for you on the cross? I left my job in the And I want to say, these have been the most exciting years of my life.

I'm so excited to serve the Lord. It's never a strain. It's never a burden.

I have no complaints. It's been exceptionally good. God's been exceptionally good to me, and God's people have been exceptionally good to me.

And those, the enemies of the Lord have also blessed me by allowing me to be tested, and tried, and to prove God's faithfulness. So, there's nobody I can really complain about. It's been a wonderful life.

I would say to anyone, the best thing you can ever do is to serve the Lord, especially if you seek for God's approval. I want to turn to 2nd Timothy in chapter 2. This is Paul's last letter, by the way. 2nd Timothy in chapter 2 and verse 15.

This was Paul's last letter to Timothy. It was, as far as we know, the last letter he wrote. And Timothy was probably around 45 years old then.

He'd already been working with Paul for 25 years. The most wholehearted of Paul's workers. Paul says that in Philippians chapter 2. But here in 2nd Timothy chapter 2 verse 15, he tells Timothy, be diligent to

present yourself approved to God.

Not blessed by God. He's already been blessed. Be diligent means work hard with all your energy and effort to present yourself to God as one whom he can approve of, as a workman, not a lazy person, and one who does not need to be ashamed of anything in one's life.

You're ashamed of thousands of things in our past life, but right now, having been cleansed in the blood of Christ, to present ourselves to God as one who's not ashamed. Do you think that's possible? Yes. Accurately handling the word of truth.

So, to present yourself to God as one whom he approves of. We need to present if you're a married man. I can think of that.

I have four sons, and my burden right from the time they were born was, Lord, I want to not only present myself. If I were alone, I'd present myself, but you've given me a family. I want to present my family to you that they will be approved by you, and the way I've brought them up will be approved by you, and that my sons will grow up to be approved by you.

And now I have these 16 grandchildren. I pray for them that they will be approved by God, that in their generation there'll be witnesses for Christ, so that from generation to generation, there'll be a witness for Christ on this earth. You need to pray that for yourself and your family, and if you have grandchildren, for grandchildren too.

It's never too early to start praying for them, that they will be approved by God, not just blessed. We pray for God's blessing on our children, grandchildren, but I want to urge you, my brothers and sisters, concentrate a little more in praying that they'll be approved, and then for our church, and the churches I have responsibility for, your church here, what should we be praying? That God will bless us? Yes, praise the Lord. We can never move without that, but I would urge you to pray that your church will be approved by God.

It doesn't matter one bit what men think about this church. They can criticize it. It doesn't matter one bit.

They approve of it. Don't be proud of that. It means nothing.

Does God approve of it? That's the only thing that matters. So that's what we want to think of as a church, and the church comprises of individuals. Church is not this building.

It's individuals. All of you who are committed to this church are the church, are this local church. So how should it be with you? So I have to speak to the individuals here.

That's the church. It's not an organization. It's not a system.

So as I share, I want each of you to think of yourself, just yourself, not of this congregation, but of yourself as one part of this church, as one part of the body that you do your part to present yourself approved to God. The Bible speaks of the Christian life as one in which we grow. We sang about grace today.

I want to show you a verse in John's gospel chapter 1, an expression which I don't know whether you have noticed. It says in John chapter 1 and verse 16, it's talking about the fullness there is in Jesus Christ. From his fullness, it says, we have received, not grace, but grace upon grace.

And I could say grace upon grace, upon grace, upon grace, upon grace. This is the Christian life. If you just received that first forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, that's good.

But you got to go a long way beyond that. To receive forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, to have that initial salvation by grace, we are by grace are you saved through faith where all our past is blotted out is the beginning. It's like sending our children to elementary school.

We're so happy that whatever age that is, five or six, they join a school and they started their education. But you're not happy that they are sitting in the kindergarten. You're happy that they joined school and they are studying.

They know that two plus two is four and they know that BAT is back. That's great. But you don't want them to spend the next 15 years just knowing that two plus two is four.

You want them to move on. You want them to move on to middle school and high school and to graduate. Every father and mother wants that.

And I want to say to you that God, your father, wants that too. He doesn't want any of you to be sitting in the kindergarten forever. Spiritual kindergarten.

So when you turn to 1 John and chapter 2, first episode of John chapter 2, we see what the elementary and the middle and the higher classes are, high school levels are in the Christian life. Three levels. And those three levels are mentioned in verses 12 to 14.

1 John chapter 2 and verse 12. I'm writing to you little children. That's the elementary school.

That's the lowest level. And your sins are forgiven. You for his name's sake.

We go to verse 13. I'm writing to you fathers. That's high school because you know him who's been from the beginning.

I'm also writing to you young men. That's the middle school because you've overcome the evil one. I've written to you children.

Again he repeats to the elementary ones because you know the father. And verse 14. Again he repeats.

I've written to you fathers. Those are in high school because you know him who's been from the beginning. And I've written to you young men.

Those are in middle school because you're strong. The word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one. So to each of these three groups he repeats it twice.

So those are the three stages in the Christian life and I want you to lead you through them. Because this is how he gets God's approval. It's like graduating from school.

And as eager as you are that your children should graduate with good grades in every class and every level. I want to say to you that God is just as eager that every one of his children. I mean if you've got three children you don't want you don't want just one of them to graduate well.

You want all three. And if God's got five or six hundred children in this church how many of them do you think God wants to graduate at each level and move on to the next one? Fifty percent? Are you happy with

fifty percent of your children graduating? Going to the next level? God is a father. A better father than any of us.

And I want to say to you he's eager that 100 percent everyone in this church moves on to the next level. And that's your responsibility to ensure that you are diligent. See if any of us have children who are intellectually or mentally challenged.

Okay we can be compassionate towards them. They cannot go through school or something like that. But if they're lazy there's no excuse for that.

We can be compassionate towards someone who's mentally challenged but not towards a lazy child. And I want to say the Bible says be diligent. He's speaking about hard work.

So what God is saying is that each of us have to work hard. Timothy at the age of 45 having been a believer for 25 years had to work hard. Paul says work hard so that God can approve of you.

I want to say to you that this church has to work hard and by this church I mean you. Individual. You.

Yourself. You can only do your part. You can't even do your wife's part you know.

You can't do your husband's part. You can only do your part. Make sure that you work hard to present yourself approved to God.

And I'm not speaking about something I have not tried to do. At least for the last 40 years since we started planting churches I have really sought to work hard with all of my heart to present myself, my family, and churches we plant as approved to God. Completely ignoring the opinions of men.

I often say that the opinions of men are fit for the trash can except the opinions of really godly men. The opinions of godly men are not fit for the trash can. The opinions of other men are fit for the trash can.

I couldn't care less for them. But if I was living in the time of the apostle Paul and if Paul had a certain opinion about me boy I would really value it. I wouldn't discard that because I think here's a man of God who feels something's wrong with me.

I better listen to that. Take it seriously my dear brothers and sisters so that in the day when Christ comes again you will have no regret. You don't have a chance to live your life again.

I'm personally convinced and not all may agree with me but I'm absolutely convinced that there are going to be many hundreds of thousands of Christians who when they get evaluated by Christ at the judgment seat that is coming there will be regret over the way they lived their life. They look back over their life and say boy I wish I'd taken it a little more seriously over there. Think of that rich young ruler who came to Jesus and wouldn't give up his money.

I don't know where he is today. If he repented towards the end of his life he's in heaven. If he didn't he's in hell.

But wherever he is go and ask him what do you think of that day when you turned away from the Lord. The Lord who gave you the same calling that he gave to Peter James and John. Forsake all and follow me.

They did it and you didn't. See where they are today in eternity and see where you are. Do you have a regret? What do you think he'd say even if he did get to heaven? Do you think he'd look back over his life without any regret? I want to ask all of you remember that day is coming.

Christ will come again. We'll be caught up in the air and we will stand at his judgment seat. Will it be enough that you finally made it to heaven? Or are you desperately eager like I am? My Savior will say to me well done good and faithful servant.

If you don't have that passion and that desire I want to say to you you don't have much gratitude for what Jesus did for you on the cross. If you're just happy that you're earning a good living you built a good house and you're comfortable and you ease your conscience by putting a few dollars into the offering box. Is that Christianity? Is that how Jesus gave himself for us? I often meditate on the cross and what Jesus gave himself for me.

That's what made me give everything up for him and that's what challenges me even today. I keep saying Lord I haven't done enough to show my gratitude to you for all that you've done for me. Like that little verse goes I cannot work my soul to save for that my Lord has done.

But I will work like any slave for love of God's dear son. Say that all your life. I cannot work my soul to save for that my Lord has done.

But I will work like any slave for love of God's dear son. Not for a reward. No I do not serve the Lord for a reward.

I will not be disappointed if I get no reward in eternity. The Lord's already done enough for me. I mean if someone is already has given you a million dollars as a gift would you ever go back to him asking for anything more? And after all that the Lord has done for me on the cross I don't want to go back to him for anything more.

I say Lord you've done more than enough. But I want to work like any slave for love of God's dear son. How many of you can honestly say I will work like any slave? A slave is one who gets no salary.

That's the difference between a slave and a servant. I will work like any slave for love of God's dear son. If not if you're not able to say that ask yourself whether you have any gratitude for what Jesus did for you on the cross to save you from an eternal hell.

So we come to the Lord and we begin as children and the first thing we need to know as children is to be absolutely sure 1 John 2 verse 12 your sins are forgiven you 1 John 2 12 for his name's sake. Not because we did anything. We got to be absolutely sure of that because if you're not sure absolutely sure that your past has been blotted out taken care of that God doesn't hold it against you you cannot make progress beyond the kindergarten.

You will sit in the kindergarten all your life and you'll be very insecure and the insecurity in your life will be manifested in wrong attitudes towards other people jealousy and competition and strife and murmuring and grumbling and so many things all because you're not sure that your own past has been taken care of. It's very very important you got to believe what the Bible says in Hebrews 8 and verse 12. Their sins and their iniquities I will not remember anymore.

It's not just that God forgives me. That itself is wonderful. All the evil things that you and I have done he doesn't just say he'll forgive me I will not remember them anymore.

In other words I will not hold that against you. We don't have to come before our heavenly father and think oh boy he knows what I did 10 years ago. He knows that terrible thing I did three years ago.

He doesn't. He knows it in his memory yes. God's memory is better than ours but he doesn't when he says I will he doesn't say I'll forget.

Let me be exact. He doesn't say in Hebrews 8 I'll forget your sins. He doesn't forgotten but he says I will remember them no more means when you come before me I don't remember what you did.

I'm not holding that against you. It's to me it's a great relief I tell you. I mean none of us would be comfortable if people knew all the wretched things we did in the past.

Well I wouldn't be comfortable if I came before God and I think in the back of his mind he's thinking what I did that yesterday or last year. No he doesn't. If you have repented, repented doesn't mean I've given up a sin.

It means I've turned away from that sin. Please understand this difference. You can repent from anger and yet not have got victory over your anger.

You can repent from sexually dirty thoughts and yet not have got victory over it. Repentance means Lord I have turned around. I don't want that life anymore.

I don't want to sin anymore. When people come to me for water baptism the question I ask them is this. Do you want to sin even once the rest of your life? I said be careful.

I'm not asking you will you sin once. None of us can say I won't but do you want to sin even once the rest of your life? And if you can't give a correct answer to that I would have to say you're not really born again. A truly born again person sees what Jesus did for him on the cross that he suffered on the cross for my sin that he says Lord I never want to sin even once.

Unfortunately we do but I don't want to. So this is what repentance is. Can I have I say I can I say I've turned around say I never want to and I believe the blood of Jesus has cleansed me.

One of the mistakes I did as a young person was I look back over some gross sin that I did and I keep confessing that many times thinking that you had to confess it many times that if it's a small sin you've got to confess it once if it's a big sin you've got to confess it 20-30 times. It depends on how big the sin is and I don't think I'm alone in that. I think all of you have probably done that and that's because we don't believe that God takes us at our word.

Then I say Lord I did that I'm sorry and he sees I'm sorry God says I will not remember that anymore. Why should I remember it? That means I can look back. Yes I really believe I really believe we need to clap hands and praise God for that that he doesn't remember our sins anymore.

That means praise the Lord. That means I can look back now over 76 years never having sinned when I stand before God. This is the meaning of justification by the blood of Jesus Christ.

To be justified means just as if I'd never sinned and to look back like that and to come before God and say God here I am 76 years without sin aren't you happy with me? You think that's an exaggeration? It is not. I'm not glorifying myself. I'm glorifying the blood of Jesus Christ.

That's kindergarten. That's not postgraduate Christianity. That's kindergarten.

Little children your sins have been forgiven you for his name's sake. I emphasize that because I see so many believers who are not clear on that. They're not they still think God's remembering their sins and when you think that you now I tell you the sin God remembers the one you're not confessed.

Sure but if you confess your sin it says he is faithful and just 1 John 1 9 to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and he says I won't remember it anymore. That's a wonderful promise and if you can believe that you can come before God with boldness. Your sins have been forgiven for his name's sake.

That is not something you learn 10 years after you're converted. You should know it the day you're converted. God does not hold my sins against me.

I stand before Christ God. I stand before my father clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The second thing about children is mentioned in 1 John and chapter 2 and verse 13.

The last part of it 13. The last part I've written into your children because you know the father. There are two things.

One is that our sins are forgiven. Our father is taken care of and that we know the father. The last part of that verse I've written into your children because you know the father.

That means you know that you have a daddy in heaven. The Bible says as soon as the Holy Spirit comes in and whenever you receive Christ into your heart do you know that the Holy Spirit comes in right then? We are baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit maybe later but the Spirit of God comes in as soon as you're born again. If you're not received the Spirit of Christ Romans 8 9 says you're not even a child of God.

So as soon as you receive Christ it's his Spirit that comes in. We seek later on to be filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit but the Spirit comes in and the first thing that Spirit says is Abba and the translation of that in English would be dad. So the Holy Spirit comes into our heart and assures us our past is forgiven and from within cries out dad.

I've got a dad in heaven which even the greatest prophets and saints in the Old Testament could not say. Do you know that Elijah could never look up and say dad? You know that John the Baptist the great prophet could not look up to heaven and call God dad? It's an amazing thing that we can do that and I wonder whether we realize the wonder of it. We don't exalt our sin above the blood of Christ.

Anytime you remember sins that you've confessed in the past you're exalting that sin above the blood of Christ. It's an insult. I exalt the blood of Christ above my sins.

That's why when God says I don't remember them I'm saying I'm not going to remember them either. I'm sorry for them. I'm sorry for the pit I was in from which God saved me and that makes me very merciful in my dealings with others.

That makes me forgive others because God's forgiven me so much. That's for sure. In the same way I appreciate the fact that God has allowed me to know him as a dad who cares for me.

You know the difference between an orphan and one who has earthly parents. An orphan is very insecure. If he has a need he doesn't know where to turn.

He may have a loving uncle around but it's nothing like having your own dad and mom. And a lot of Christians I find are like orphans. They're so insecure.

Some problem arises and they don't know where to turn. They don't have a dad in heaven. Like that little verse about two birds talking to each other said the robin to the sparrow.

I would really like to know why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so. Said the sparrow to the robin. Friend I think it must be that they have no heavenly father such as cares for you and me.

Is that what the birds are saying when they look at your life? Look at this anxious couple always worried about something in their home and one bird says to the other perhaps they don't have a father like we have who cares for us. We don't have a bank account. We don't have any savings but our father cares for us.

Do you have a dad in heaven? This is kindergarten lesson. A lot of our problems in Christian life is we haven't learned our kindergarten lessons properly. You think kindergarten lessons are not important? If you did not study the alphabet properly how would you be able to read any book in middle school or high school? You wouldn't be able to study physics or chemistry or history or anything if you don't know the alphabet.

That's why we have to teach children the alphabet. The alphabet of the Christian life is to know that your sins are forgiven and that you've got a dad in heaven. If you have not understood that properly I want to tell you all your life, your entire school life, you'll have problems.

I've seen Christians like that. The problem is they've not understood what they should know right at the beginning. I've got a dad up in heaven.

Very, very, very important. Okay, let's move on to middle school. 1 John chapter 2 and verse 13.

It says here, I'm writing to you young men, verse 13 in the middle, because you've overcome the evil one. And then it goes on to explain it further in the next verse. In verse 14, the word of God abides in you.

The last part of verse 14, and you have overcome the evil one. How do we overcome the evil one? In the kindergarten I'm only thinking of I've been forgiven. I've got a dad in heaven.

I must not stop there. I've got to go on to facing temptation and trial. I remember one of my grandchildren once asking me when he was about seven years old, he said, grandpa, why doesn't God destroy the devil? I said, boy, that's an intelligent question for a seven-year-old to ask.

I better tell him that. And I said, I said, it's because, you know, in our body would not become strong if he just ate food. We have to do exercise.

And whenever we do exercise, whether it's running or doing something with our hands or lifting weights or anything, we're subjecting our muscles to resistance. And when we subject those muscles, leg muscles,

anything to resistance, that's how they become strong. So God has allowed the devil to exist to resist us.

Otherwise who'd resist us? The angels are not going to resist us. God's allowed the devil to exist to resist us so that as we resist him, we become strong. So you got to resist the devil.

And the devil tells you not to obey your parents. You say, I'm going to resist you. I'm going to obey daddy and mommy.

He understood it. I hope you have understood it. Why God has not destroyed the devil.

He's allowed him to exist and not only to exist, but to irritate you and trouble you and tempt you. And if you yield to it, it's like that lazy person who says, well, I'm not going to do any exercise. I'm just going to eat.

But you know what, what that person will be after some time, fat and flabby. You know, the difference between a fat person and a strong person. That's the difference between a fat Christian who knows such a lot about the Bible and a strong one who can overcome Satan, who can overcome temptation.

Do you want to be a fat Christian or a strong one? All the Bible knowledge you cram in your head by coming to meetings and services and all that, that doesn't make you spiritual. It's a strong Christian who is spiritual. How do you prove, show yourself approved to God just by reading the Bible for half an hour in the morning? I'll tell you something.

I would rather miss reading the Bible in the morning and obey the Bible during the day than ease my conscience that I read my Bible for 15 minutes and go and tell a lie or get upset with somebody during the day, any day, or lust after some woman. Better you don't read the Bible. The purpose of reading the Bible is that we obey it.

So the word of God abides in us and we overcome the evil one. It's very important. That's why it's very important to read God's Word every day, sometime at least during the day.

And if your day was started in a hurry and you didn't get time to read the Bible in the morning, don't get discouraged. I think you have enough of God's Word stored in your mind for you to meditate on it, even though you forgot to read the Bible in the morning or you didn't get time for it. Don't condemn yourself during the day.

Try to bring back to your mind, maybe when you're driving your car or sitting at work, something that you read and you remember and meditate on it. Let the Word of God abide in you. You know that if you eat your food and it doesn't get digested, it doesn't help your body.

You just throw it up again. But it's when it's digested that it gets converted into blood, flesh, and bones. In the same way the Bible speaks about meditating on His Word.

Blessed is the man, not who reads the Word, but who meditates on His Word day and night. Psalm 1, it's the first Psalm. Blessed is the man who meditates on the Word of God day and night.

That doesn't mean we read the Bible day and night. It means we meditate on something which is in our mind whenever we get the opportunity throughout the day and even in the middle of the night if you wake up. It often happens to me to wake up in the middle of the night and let me think of something that I read in God's Word, something that God wants to say to me.

I want to recommend that to all of you. And if you ever wake up in the middle of the night and it can happen, with older people like us it happens frequently. Say what Samuel said, speak Lord.

Your servant is listening. And you'll hear something that'll really bless you. Something that you stored up in your head.

The Word of God abiding in you. The word abide means that's my permanent address. You know we have a permanent mailing address, my residential address.

This is my permanent residential address. I don't plan to shift. This is my permanent home.

The Word of God abiding in us means I have received the Word and have stored it up and stored it up. That's why when Jesus was tempted he could immediately bring out one verse. The Word of God is not just like one sword.

It's like many swords in an armory. And here the devil came to him with turn these stones into your bread, your physical need. Meet your physical need.

That need could be for food or for sex or anything. These are physical needs. And you have a sword to take it out and say no.

God's Word says I can't do that. God's Word says it's wrong to have those wrong sexual desires. God's Word said it's wrong for example to steal food even if I'm hungry.

Now whether you steal a sexual thought or steal food, it's wrong because that's not the way God intended for us to meet these needs. There are needs there and there's a Word of God that that I can stand up and hold against the devil just like Jesus. You know that the devil tempted Eve with his physical need and tempted Jesus also with his physical need.

Turn these stones into bread and he'll tempt you with your physical need too. If he could tempt Jesus with it, why not you? But you must have a Word that abides in you that you can call to him in the sexual area. If a man lusts after a woman, desires her body and imagines that he's doing something with her body in his mind, it's equal to committing adultery.

And then just like the devil told Eve, not really. God doesn't really mean that you can't eat from this tree. Oh he says he's God said you'll surely die.

No you will not die. Have you heard God? Have you heard the devil saying that to you? That's not serious. I know it says that in Matthew chapter 5 that he should not lust after a woman but it's not serious.

You will not die. Have you listened to the devil like him like Eve did and believed that you will not die? You know what Romans 8 13 says? Let me read Romans 8 13. It's a very important verse for believers.

Romans chapter 8 and verse 13. If you live, now by the way if you read the previous verses it's written for believers. If you live according to the flesh you will die.

You must die. It's just like the Lord telling Adam if you eat from that tree you will die. And the devil says you will not die.

And when the Lord says this is the equivalent of what the Lord told Adam today to us. If you're living according to the flesh according to the lust in your flesh you will die. And the devil says you will not die.

What's the difference between what the devil tells you and what he told Eve? The word of God must abide in you if you are to overcome the evil one. This is how we present ourselves approved to God. This is how this church can be approved to God.

If each person takes that word seriously and say we want to present ourselves approved to God. That's why a church that's approved to God is one that's constantly leading people to turn from sin. It's not the amount of offering you have in your offering box that determines whether you're approved of God or not.

Unfortunately so many churches today they think the approval of God comes by the number of seats that are filled on Sunday morning or the amount of money in the offering box. The elders get excited when there are more people or there's more money. What have we descended to? Are we like the corporations in the world? They say our products we've produced more cars this year than last year and our income our profit is much more than the previous year.

All the corporations in the world have a lot of glory in that whether it's toothpaste or cars or whatever it is. But the church of Jesus Christ is different. He said you cannot serve God and money.

What do you think Jesus Christ if he were to come right here right now and examine this church? What do you think he would be looking for? Would he be interested to know how many seats are filled? Would he be interested to know what was your offering this Sunday? Or would he be interested to know what is the attitude towards sin to all these people who claim to be members of this church? Much much more important. Be diligent. Be diligent.

I'm not saying that we should not invite more people. I wish every single seat were full and this bay area is so needy that we need a lot more people to be saved than are saved right now. And the way we see things going at this present time in decline in this nation and in Christendom particularly.

We want more people to be saved. Sure. And to serve God money is required but that's not the main thing.

I'll tell you this. If you seek for the power of the Holy Spirit to serve God he will take care of the money. I've seen that.

I've proved that in 40 years of serving the Lord and planning so many churches in one of the poorest nations on the earth in the poorest villages. Never once have we run short of money. We've built meeting halls.

We've provided for so many conferences where we provide everything freely. Never once have we had a mortgage or debt or anything. Money is not the main thing my brothers and sisters.

I would say to you with all my heart seek the kingdom of God first and all your other needs will be added to you. I proved that in my personal life before I got married. I proved it in my married life and my family for all these years even in times when we were in dire need and poor.

We proved trust to the Lord and I proved it in churches and cities and in the poorest villages and in a couple of villages where there was no church for 2,000 years. I proved it even there. God is faithful in the

21st century in the poorest countries in the world but he sees whether we seek his kingdom of his first and you know what the kingdom of God is? In my early days I thought seeking the kingdom of God was to do missionary work.

No. The kingdom of God Romans 14 17 is righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Seek for righteousness in your life.

Seek for peace with God and with all men and in your heart and seek to live a life of joy and thanksgiving instead of complaining and grumbling. That is the kingdom of God. Seek for righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit and all these other needs will be added to you in your personal life in your family life and in the church.

I can say that boldly. So we move on from middle school to high school 1 John chapter 2. We read about fathers. It's not enough that we overcome sin.

It's a stage but we move on to become spiritual fathers to others and when we talk about children young men and fathers we are not talking about age. A person can be 80 years old and still be a babe spiritually and a person can be 30 years old and a spiritual father. A father is one who has a concern for others who's not just seeking his own.

You know how fathers are mothers are fathers and mothers think of them together parents they sacrifice sacrifice. Think of that father working the whole day in in his office or his factory slogging away sometimes taking two jobs. Mothers working so hard morning till night.

Who are they doing it for? They're not doing it for themselves. They're doing it for their children. Look at the amount of work they put in and it's all for someone else for our children.

That's the heart of a father and the church needs many people with that spirit of those who are willing to serve others who are willing to shepherd others. Think of fathers and mothers who care for their children protect them if they're sick. They visit them and encourage them and spend time with them.

Sacrifice whatever they can for the children. That is the highest level. It says you know fathers you know him who has been from the beginning.

You know that God you've understood 1 John chapter 2 verse 13 you know him who has been from the beginning. God who has been loved from the beginning whose heart cannot be moved from love towards other people no matter how they treat you. You parents know how much your children have irritated you troubled you and disobeyed you hurt you but you still love them.

God is like that and the spiritual father is like that. He's not going to be offended because somebody said something to hurt him. He's a kid.

You're a father. Don't behave like a kid yourself and love him. The spiritual fathers care.

We need not just one pastor in a church. We need many. Jesus cared for 12.

I've often thought of that proportion. So if a church has got 600 people, how many shepherds do you need? 50. 600 divided by 12.

Simple. It's not just one person. It needs the number of people who should be under shepherds who are willing to take care of those who are younger than them.

Encourage them. Help them. They may not have the maturity of the much older shepherds but to be an under shepherd to be a father and let me turn you to a verse in a beautiful verse in Jeremiah chapter 3. It's always been a challenge to me.

God's given me a responsibility as a shepherd and I think of this verse. The Lord says in verse 14 and 15 of Jeremiah chapter 3. Jeremiah chapter 3 verse 14 and 15. Return oh faithless sons that I'm a master to you.

I will take you. This is how God builds a church. I'll take you one from a city here, two from a family and I'll bring you to Zion.

It's a picture of Zion. It's an Old Testament reference to the New Testament church and then how do you know you've come to the true church of God. I will give you there shepherds after my own heart who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

That's been the challenge to me. Lord if I'm a shepherd I want to be a shepherd after your own heart. In other words my heart must be like God's.

Otherwise I'm not a shepherd. Not a true shepherd. Just because somebody calls me pastor I don't become a pastor.

If 10,000 people call you a prophet you don't become a prophet and if 10,000 people call you a pastor you're not a shepherd. Just a title worth nothing but to be a shepherd in your heart. To be a shepherd after God's own heart.

The care that God has. The sacrifice God was willing to make so that other people could come where he is. The longing and to push people up.

Never to push them down. Never to discourage them. To encourage them.

This is high school. We need to graduate from here. We need to be children, young men and fathers.

Don't ever stop and don't think that any of you cannot be brothers and sisters. Can be spiritual fathers and mothers to the younger ones. I believe that if you can start taking that responsibility today.

Take a decision today. Lord I want to be a man after your own heart. I want to be a woman after your own heart.

I believe with all my heart that every one of you can come to these three stages. Don't ever be satisfied with where you are right now and don't look at others and be discouraged because they're lazy and sticking around in some lower level. You say Lord I don't want to judge them.

I'm not here. I want to pursue after Jesus and be available to you. I want to stand before you one day with no regret.

I pray that will be true in your life. There's one more thing I want to say before I finish and that's about a little book that's being sold out there. It's a commentary that I have written on the Bible.

What I have learned from scripture over the last more than 50 years. It's called Through the Bible. Through many years I've read many individual books but I never, I personally could not find a commentary that spoke to my heart.

Most of them will speak to my head. So I decided that I want to write a book, a commentary of the Bible that speaks to people's hearts and which is practical. So everything I've written there has come from my own life.

What I've known the Lord in 57 years and I want you to know a couple of things. If it's a little expensive, it's more than 50 percent of the cost is the shipping. If you want it cheaper, come to India.

You'll get it for less than, less than, the price is less than half of it in India. So most of it goes in shipping. Unfortunately shipping costs are high and I also want you to know another thing that I don't get one cent royalty out of a lot of Christian large books to get royalties.

I don't get royalties for any of my books. My services to the Lord are free because the Lord has done so much for me. Thank you.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/43oNuq65f5Y.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/a-church-that-gets-gods-approval/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net