

# A Time To Repent and Set Matters Right

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all our loved ones are saved and in God's kingdom, highlighting the urgency of sharing the gospel with those close to us. It stresses the significance of forgiveness, both receiving and extending it, and the need to settle any unresolved conflicts before facing judgment. The speaker warns against believing in false stories of heaven and hell experiences and emphasizes the absolute truth found only in the Bible, urging listeners to prioritize knowing and obeying God's Word.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:15, Matthew 5:23, 1 John 2:28, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Acts 20:26, Romans 12:18, Hebrews 9:27, Mark 16:15, Luke 16:19, 2 Corinthians 12:4

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## Description

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## Transcript

My burden is primarily this evening, this afternoon, something special for those whom we know, we come across, who may not make it into the kingdom of God in the final day. There's a song that families sometimes sing, will the circle be unbroken by and by, the sweet by and by where the family all meeting together for family prayer, all the children there. And years later, the children have grown up and left home.

And then one day Christ comes and there are gaps in that family. Some people are not converted. Some people are not in God's kingdom.

So it's very important that we take this seriously in our immediate family. No one should be missing in the final day when Christ comes again. And many of you are fortunate that you have understood these truths when your children are small or recently married.

I'm very thankful that I understood this before I got married. So that I was, my burden was that every one of my children should be in God's kingdom and be useful to God while they're on earth. That should be our burden for every one of our children.

Sometimes we take so many things for granted. I find that with many believers, they don't believe that Jesus meant what he said. It's amazing.

You know, in India, we have newspapers and in different, different languages. And I've seen many of those newspapers in different languages. Almost every day, there'll be a obituary column.

Obituary, for those of you who don't know, is where they describe where about a person's death when he was born and when he died. And very often, it doesn't matter what their religion is, whether they are Christians or Hindus or Muslims or anybody, it'll be written very often at the bottom, they are now at the feet of the Lord. Everyone, nobody described, no one is mentioned as he's gone to hell or we don't know where he is.

Every one of those obituary columns are absolutely certain, whatever religion they are, they are in the presence of the Lord. Well, I don't agree with that. Either Jesus' words are true or they are false.

And if Jesus' words are true, and the words of the Holy Spirit in Scripture are true, many of those people are not in the presence of the Lord. Because Jesus said very clearly when he told the disciples to go and preach the gospel in all the world, he said in Mark 16, go and preach the gospel to all creation, Mark 16, 15. And my dear brothers and sisters, that is a commission that comes to us.

We must be burdened about those we know, who are not converted. Those who are close to us, we don't have to think of every Tom, Dick and Harry that we know in the office anymore. Those who are close to us, relatives, those who are very close friends of ours, going to all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

He who has believed and has been baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe, baptism is not mentioned there, will be condemned. That's clear.

To me, it's just, there's going to be a division. And I don't want to get a surprise in the final day. But we know our own families are in God's kingdom, but we need to have a burden for those whom the Lord has allowed to come to know us.

And many, many, I think of many believers as well, who do not realize the truth of words like this. They say, well, I've accepted the Lord. But it says in Hebrews chapter three and verse 14, that we become partakers of Christ.

If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm until the end. There's a big capital I F. If, and that means what about, read it the other way. If we do not hold fast the beginning of our assurance, if we started off our Christian life firm until the end, we will not be partakers of Christ finally.

That to me, that's crystal clear. So we need to make sure that we are going to end up in God's kingdom and those we love are going to be in God's kingdom. And our children will also be there.

We have to think of verses like this that warn us. You read in Hebrews nine and verse 27, it is appointed in as much as appointed for men to die once. And after this judgment, now the Roman Catholic church just thought for years, for centuries, that there's a place called purgatory where people go.

And then you give money to the church here and pray. And those souls will gradually move out of purgatory and slowly find their way into God's kingdom. That is absolute heresy.

That's not in Jesus never said that. There's one clear example of what happens after death in a true story, the true story of what happened when two people died. Luke chapter 16, we read about, you know, the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

They were both Jewish people. They were both descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were true Israelites.

They were circumcised. They were attending the synagogues. But we read that as soon as that rich man died, despite his having visited the synagogue every Saturday and probably knowing the scriptures, he went to hell immediately.

Before the doctor could certify that he's dead, the man was in hell. And the next day when his funeral was being conducted and all the rabbis and all were praising him for what a wonderful man he is and saying that he's at the feet of the Lord, he was burning in hell. And that poor beggar Lazarus, who nobody cared for, does not mention of anything.

It says about these two people in Luke 16 that the rich man died and he was buried. It's mentioned there, Luke 16, 22. But about Lazarus's death, there's no mention about his burial at all.

What happened to him? Nobody cared for him. Somebody probably took his body up and threw it into some waste ground somewhere and threw some mud over it. That was it.

But it says the angels, Luke 16, 22, carried him into paradise. So there's the only place in the gospels where Jesus clearly says of what happened to two people immediately after they died. And it had nothing to do with doctrinal differences.

This rich man and Lazarus believed exactly the same doctrine. They believed in the God who delivered the Israelites from Egypt and they were God's people and all that. But one of those persons who thought himself to be God's people ended up in hell and he has been burning in hell for the last 2000 years.

Don't forget that. And he's still crying out for water. It's only his soul, but he feels it.

And can you think of all the regret he has, the opportunities he had on earth that he missed out on? And he's concerned about his brothers. He says to Lazarus, because he says in Luke 16, verse 28, I've got five brothers. Please let Lazarus go and warn them because they warned them so that they don't come to this place of torment.

Abraham said, no, they've got the Bible. So this is Abraham's answer is they have got the Bible. Luke 16, 29, let them read the Bible.

Let them hear what God's word says. There's no need for any angel or man to go back after death to warn them. Hey, fellas, you know what the Bible says is true.

There's an eternal hell. There's an eternal heaven. There's no need for that.

If they don't believe the Bible, they will not, no matter what, whoever comes and tells them, they'll not believe. But he said in verse 30, now listen to this. This rich man finally understands why he is in hell.

Listen to the gospel being preached from hell. Abraham, if someone goes from the dead to preach to them, then they will repent. Then they will turn from their sin.

He knows it's because he didn't turn from his sin that he is in hell. That's the gospel. If they do not repent, if they do not turn from their sin, if they do not turn from their selfish worldly way of life towards God, no matter what religion they preach, no matter how much they read the Bible and go to the church or synagogue regularly, they are going to land up with me here.

So please send somebody to warn them and listen to Abraham's reply, Luke 16, 31. If they don't read the Bible, if they don't believe the Bible, even if somebody rises from the dead, they will not be convinced. Jesus has now risen from the dead, but they're not convinced because they, you see the tremendous emphasis to two things that people in hell give to.

Please listen to this. This is a message from hell, from a man who's facing eternity in hell. He does this about two things.

One, he says, you've got to repent. You've got to turn from your sin. That's why that's been the main burden of my preaching for 45 years.

And the second thing is that both Abraham repeatedly says the Bible, the Bible, verse 29, the Bible, verse 31. Those days it was Moses and the prophets. That means from Genesis, the first book of Moses, all the way to Malachi, the last prophet.

He's talking about the 39 books of the Old Testament. Today we have got 66 books in the whole Bible. Notice the emphasis in heaven to the Bible.

They got the Bible. Let them read that. They, if they don't listen to what's written in the Bible, even if someone rises from the dead, they will not believe.

Very important to read what's written in scripture. Hebrews chapter nine, verse 27. It is appointed unto men once to die and after that, the judgment.

Now, if you go to Google and search for people who've gone to heaven and hell and come back, believe me, I checked it. There are 10 million links given there. 10 million.

Every one of it is a lie. I don't believe any of these people who say they've gone to hell and come heaven or hell and come back. They're just making money, fooling people.

The thing is I have met Christians who believe this type of rubbish. Why do they believe it? Just like Abraham said, they don't read the Bible. They don't believe the Bible.

They go to the internet more than they read the Bible. I want to ask you, how many of you know the news more than what God has to say to you through the Bible every day? I want to tell you, I don't care whether you're an NCC or any other church, you are in danger. If you don't know the scriptures and you don't respect the scriptures, you don't know what danger you are facing, my dear brothers, sisters.

My duty to tell you that and don't believe all these lies of people who say they've gone to heaven or hell and come back. There was only one man who I know definitely went to heaven. Jesus, of course, came from heaven, but who went to, we know that Moses and Elijah came on the mount to speak to Jesus and they spoke about his departure in Jerusalem, but Peter and James and John, they don't tell us anything about talking to Moses and Elijah, what they heard there.

No. And the only person in the Bible you read, other than that, who went to heaven and came back is, I believe that one case, and that is the apostle Paul. And the Holy Spirit inspired him to write something here to warn us about all these millions of people who say they've gone to heaven and hell today.

Second Corinthians 12, he says, I was caught up into paradise. Paradise is the third heaven. Second Corinthians 12 verse four.

And listen to this. I heard certain words there. Paul actually went to heaven to the immediate presence of God, where Jesus is there.

And he heard number of things being spoken there. And he said, they are inexpressible, very difficult to express them. And it's, I'm not permitted to speak about it.

That's the personal thing I wanted you to notice there. I'm not permitted to tell anyone. Second Corinthians 12, four, what I heard there.

Do you believe that's eternal truth that a man, even if God takes him to heaven, like Paul, he's not permitted to ever talk about it to any human being. Then how is it so many Christians believe all this rubbish written in books about people who are going to heaven and hell. Please don't believe all this.

There's only one book in the world that tells us the truth and that's the Bible. And it's very, very important. I say this because there are so many stories going around and you may be clear, but make sure your children also don't believe all that nonsense when they grow up.

Because there are stories like that. You know, there was a story of a child who had an accident and who said, wrote a book about it, published by a reputed Christian publisher. And he said, oh, so he went to describe the whole thing.

And 10 or 15 years later, when he grew up, that same boy said the whole thing was a lie. My father told me to write all that. And he made a lot of money by selling that book.

And that it's one of the most reputed Christian publishers in America who published it. And of course they had to withdraw it. But for so many 10 or 15 years, people believe this nonsense till the boy grew up and said, this is all fake, just a way to make money.

So dear brothers, there are a lot of deception going on in this area. That's why I mentioned it. So what are the things that can prevent a person from being ready for the coming of Christ? I just want to say some things which I've spoken of many times, but let me repeat it.

In Matthew chapter 6, this is very, very important. More and more, I find I'm referring to this in these days. And that's the matter of forgiving others.

Matthew 6, verse 15. If you do not forgive others, your father will not forgive your sins. Even if you repent, you have really repented of all the wrong things you did in your life.

You've come to NCCF. You've decided to deny yourself in so many areas. You stopped watching pornography.

You're taking the scriptures seriously. You're seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But there's one person you have not forgiven, who did something against you or your family long ago.

I want to tell you as a servant of the Lord, you will not be in heaven. That's for sure. Either that or Jesus is a liar.

You have to make a choice. If you don't believe what I'm saying, you're saying Jesus is a liar. What did Jesus say? If you do not forgive others, your father will not forgive your transgressions.

Even if you confess them, even if you're repentant, and even if you claim the blood of Christ, why? This is the truth. And yet a person who dies without being forgiven, he didn't forgive, according to Matthew 6, verse 15, and he died. Is there someplace after death, like the Roman Catholics say, in purgatory, where you can then set that matter right and forgive somebody and get into God's presence? Anyone who does not forgive others actually believes in something like that.

Because he thinks, yeah, yeah, it'll happen. How do you know that if suddenly death comes? I'm particularly burdened about it when I read of all the people in India today who are dying of COVID. We had five or six cases in CFC churches, many of them older than 60, but one or two in their 40s.

And it's happening all around. That's what burdens me to make sure that these people are clear, that they have forgiven every single person. And you cannot remove it from your mind.

I've said this many times, but I'll repeat it forever. As long as I'm alive, I'll repeat it. The importance of forgiving every person from our heart.

You don't wish them any evil, whatever evil they may have done to you or your family, we must forgive them. The other thing is to ask forgiveness from those whom you have hurt. That's the other side of the coin.

Turn to Matthew 5. See, both of these are on the Sermon on the Mount. And at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, if you hear my words and don't do them, you're like a man who's built on sand. But if you hear my words and do them, then you're building on the rock.

Make sure you're building on the rock. Asking forgiveness from others. Matthew 5. When you come to the, verse 23, when you come before God to present your offering, that's your prayer or your request.

And there you remember that your brother's got something against you. Matthew 5, 23. Why does he have something against you? Because you did something to hurt him or his family.

Or in some way, or you cheated him or you robbed him or do something. And what should you do? Stop praying. Have you seen Jesus saying, stop praying? If you realize you've hurt somebody and you've not asked his forgiveness, stop praying.

God's not going to listen to you. Leave your offering there. Go first, be reconciled to your brother.

Because you hurt him. Then come and present your offering. And what if you die in that condition without being reconciled? Then you come to present your offering in eternity before God and says, I can't accept it.

I can't accept your life into heaven. I can't accept your life into heaven. Because you did not settle with somebody there.

Now, what if you tried your best and the guy did not respond? Well, the Bible says in Romans 12, verse 18, if possible, as much as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. That's the only verse in the Bible which says, do this if possible. It doesn't say if possible, avoid anger.

If possible, avoid lusting after women. If possible, don't love money. No.

But one verse in the Bible says, if possible, do it. Why? Because this depends on the other person's cooperation as well. You can't be at peace with somebody if the other person doesn't want it.

You can't live condemning yourself because that guy's not willing to be at peace. You've done your part. You've asked his forgiveness.

You've forgiven. But he still doesn't want. Then the Bible says, forget it.

As far as lies in you, live peace with all men. If he doesn't want it, don't worry about it. 1 John 2, verse 28, little children, abide in Christ so that when he appears, we can have boldness and not shrink away in shame when he comes.

There are going to be two categories of so-called believers, the wise virgins and the foolish virgins. Remember, it is not five virgins and five prostitutes in this parable in Matthew 25. Ten virgins.

All of them had their lamp burning, but only five had an inner light of oil inside. So here it says, little children. He's speaking to believers.

He's not saying children and ungodly people. No. My dear believers, 1 John 2, 28.

When Jesus appears, some people are going to say, yeah, Lord, I'm so happy to meet you. Boldness. And the others are going to shrink away in shame.

It is coming. Why do they shrink away in shame? Because there's something not settled. It's appointed unto men once to die.

After this, the judgment. Believers, one last verse, 2 Corinthians, chapter five, verse 10, verse nine. First of all, whether we are at home in heaven or absent from home, we want to be pleasing to the Lord.

Paul says, it doesn't matter to me whether I'm at home in heaven or absent from my heavenly home here. I want to please the Lord. Why? For, for means because.

Why do I want to be pleasing to the Lord? Because I must appear at the judgment seat of Christ. We will all appear there so that everyone will be rewarded for whatever he did in his body. According to what he did, whether good or bad.

Therefore, I say this about myself too, as I preach, knowing the fear of the Lord, I persuade people, knowing the fear of the Lord, knowing how serious this is. I persuade people. There was a time when Paul said to the elders in Ephesus, after having preached there for three years, I am innocent of the blood of all men because, this is Acts 20, verse 26 and 27.

I'm free from the blood of all men. No one can hold me responsible for their going to hell because I have declared to you, verse 27, the whole purpose of God. Not just believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I proclaim to you, you've got to repent and turn from sin.

You've got to settle matters with people you may have hurt. You've got to return things you have taken wrongfully as far as possible. God doesn't demand the impossible.

As much as it lies in you, live at peace with all men. Dear brothers and sisters, please take this seriously and consider those who are your loved ones, whom you know. You never know when death will come and don't let it be said about you in the final day that you had the opportunity to share something, the truth with someone, but you wanted to be so popular with that person that you didn't speak the truth.

Forget about popularity. A person's eternal destiny is far more important. Let's pray.

Now, if the Lord has reminded you of something to be done, make a note of it and say, Lord, help me not to forget it because I'm sure the devil would like you to forget it by tomorrow. Heavenly Father, help us each one to take your word seriously and to be ready for your coming and to stand before you. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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