

Are You Religious Or Spiritual

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the contrast between religiosity and spirituality, highlighting the importance of seeking divine righteousness over human righteousness, depth in one's relationship with God, and humility in serving Him. It warns against the dangers of external righteousness, seeking human approval, and being influenced by evil spirits in religious settings.

Scripture: Psalms 119:130, Matthew 23:12, Revelation 21:2, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Isaiah 45:15, Revelation 18:2, Revelation 21:16

Topics: "True Spirituality", "Humility in Service"

Description

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Transcript

I want to first of all show you a verse in Psalm 119. Psalm 119 and verse 130. There are some very lovely verses in Psalm 119.

If you take time sometime to read it, probably take you only five minutes, but you'll come across some amazing verses. And one of those is this verse. The unfolding of your words gives light.

It gives understanding to the simple. God's word is like something wrapped up until you unfold it. You can't see what's inside.

It's like, you know, you have a closed Bible. You don't know what's inside. When you open it, you see God's, the verses in Scripture are also like that.

I believe each verse is like something closed and it's unfolded. You get light and light is life. Otherwise we just get understanding.

And this is the type of understanding that God wants to give to the simple. And when it says simple in this verse, it's referring to those who are unwise, not stupid, but who don't understand. You know, just like in the world, you talk about simple people who can't understand intellectual matters.

In the Bible, when it talks about simple people, it talks about those who can't understand spiritual matters. So those who can't understand spiritual matters, God's word is unfolded and gives light and understanding. So that's what we want to do today.

I want to take you through a brief Bible study through from Genesis to Revelation. It's not going to take a long time, just the usual time. But to show you the difference between being religious and being spiritual.

We've often spoken about it. In fact, it's been one of our themes in this church for many years. You don't hear much about it in other churches.

Religiosity and spirituality. What's the difference between being religious and being spiritual? And through the years, many new people have joined this church. We praise the Lord for that.

And there's often a need to go through again truths that some of you may have heard years ago. And even if you heard it years ago, it's good to refresh our minds. So throughout the scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, you find two streams of religiosity and spirituality.

Those who understand spiritual reality and those who are just religious. And very often they look the same on the outside. It's like real diamonds and fake diamonds.

They look the same or a real currency note in a counterfeit. They look the same unless you look very carefully. And if you are buying gold or diamonds or you heard there's a lot of counterfeit currency around, you'd be very careful when you go to purchase something to make sure you don't get a fake.

Now you're not going to lose much in eternity if you've collected a lot of gold or counterfeit currency, but you're going to lose everything if you had a fake Christianity which is just religious, not spiritual. It's far more important to discern between religiosity and spirituality than a piece of glass and a diamond or a counterfeit note. I wonder if you realize that.

You know, if you don't if you don't see that seriously, I don't think you're going to get much out of this study. But if you believe that your relationship with God and to be right with God and to be sure about our eternal destiny is far more important than any amount of deception that any person can do to you with offering you counterfeit stuff. If you believe that's more important, eternity is more important, then you'll pay attention to what I'm saying.

See, right at the beginning you'll find two trees in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2, and right at the end of the Bible you find two systems. The two trees have developed into two systems, big huge systems. One is called Babylon and the other is called Jerusalem, but it started with these two trees and went right through the scriptures and you will see that.

And these two trees, you know, they're mentioned in Genesis chapter 2. They're called the Tree of Life in verse 9. And the Tree of Life was right in the middle of the Garden, that is in the center of Eden, showing that it was the most prominent thing and that which God wanted Adam to partake of. And then there was somewhere else, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And there you have the origin of true spirituality and religiosity.

Spiritual people look for life. Religious people look for a knowledge of good and evil. Now you would think knowledge of good and evil is a good thing.

We teach our children the knowledge of good and evil. To know evil, that's a bad thing. But to distinguish between good and evil, isn't that a good thing? Religious people think so.

So religious people are not evil. They won't get a, they won't be classified as evil. We can say there are evil people, there are religious people, and there are spiritual people.

There's a lot of difference. But ultimately, in eternity, the religious people are going to spend eternity with the evil people. That's the sad thing.

That's the tragedy. Do you think the Pharisees went to heaven? They went where the other thief went, the one who did not repent, who was a murderer all his life. They went where the terrorists and the murderers and adulterers have gone, in spite of all their religion, in spite of their paying their tithe, in spite of their going to synagogue every day, all of their lives, in spite of their keeping all the commandments, external ones, I mean.

It was Jesus himself who said concerning them in Matthew 23, how will you escape the damnation of hell? This is why it is serious. When you realize that there are evil people in the world, religious people, and spiritual people, and the religious people are consigned to the same eternal fate as evil people, then you realize that Christianity teaches something very different from what most religions teach. Most religions teach there are good people, evil people, God will take the good people to heaven and the evil people to hell.

Well, that's human understanding. If you don't believe the Bible is the word of God, then of course that's what you believe. I believe the Bible is the word of God and I believe there's only one person who walked on this earth who could tell us about eternity, nobody else.

The rest are guessing. Like I use this example, if you get a room full of people who have never seen an elephant or even a picture of an elephant and does not know that such an animal exists, and if you ask them all, tell them all there is an animal in India called an elephant. Can you draw a picture of it? I guarantee if a hundred people are drawing it will be a hundred different pictures because none of them have seen it.

This is how we have so many religions in the world. Nobody's come from heaven, nobody's died and come back and told us what heaven is like. Everybody's guessing, but there's one person who walked on this earth who came from heaven, so I believe him.

I believe what he says is right and we tell the religious pharisees that they're going to hell, I believe it and I don't want to be in that category. Therefore I want to be clear that I want to be spiritually minded, not religious. And when we see that religion comes through the knowledge of good and evil, what did Adam get through partaking of that tree of knowledge of good and evil? He got the knowledge of good and evil resident within him and the Lord said you will die.

The day you eat it, you will die spiritually. He died physically also, but that also in God's reckoning one day is a thousand years and the Bible says one day is a thousand years and no human beings ever lived more than one day in God's eyes. Everybody died before they were a thousand years old.

So in the day that man ate, they died. Man, Adam died physically and spiritually in the day that he ate of it and yet so many Christians think that because I know what's good and evil and I can decide myself, I don't need life. I can decide myself which TV programs are good to watch and which are not.

I don't need to pray. I can decide myself which movies are good and which are bad. I can decide myself whether Harry Potter is a good book to read or not and whether it's good for my children or not.

Well, I hope you'll see your children with you in eternity. I hope you're not feeding them with poison in the interest of increasing their knowledge. We've got to be very careful in the day and age in which we live.

You must remember the entire educational system of this world is under the control of the devil. That's why they teach evolution. That's why they teach against God.

That's why they teach against creation. The financial systems of the world are under the control of the devil. The entertainment systems of the world are all under the control of the devil.

If you're not watchful, you've got to be very careful about the things that come from the educational systems and the financial systems and the entertainment systems of this world. You can think that this is good and this is evil because your forefather partook of that tree. And because you go to church, you know a little bit of the Bible, you think you're all right.

Dear brother, sister, what you need is life. Jesus did not come to give us the knowledge of good and evil. He came to give us life.

The knowledge of good and evil is like a law. We can say the whole law. What was the law? It was the knowledge of good and evil.

What you should do and what you shouldn't do. Even for small things like if you found a nest on the ground with a mother bird and baby birds, the law told you what to do. What you could take and what you should let go.

There were small, small things. If you had leprosy, what you're supposed to do. If there was pollution in the house, what you're supposed to do.

The law was very clear. This is good. This is evil.

But it didn't bring life. All those who are under the law died spiritually. So there are in the world, we can say the lawless who don't believe in any law, the legalistic and the spiritual or the worldly, what we'd call the worldly.

And those are strict legalists and the spiritual. There's a lot of difference. Many legalistic people think they are spiritual.

They're not. The pharisees thought they were the most spiritual people on the face of the earth. And I believe that even Peter, James and John in their younger days must have thought if you had asked Peter, can you tell me some spiritual man that you know? They'd point out one of the pharisees.

And they must have got the shock of their life when they heard Jesus lambasting the pharisees and saying they were going to hell. The people whom they thought were the most spiritual people on earth. Jesus said they were going to hell.

The unfolding of your word gives light. There's no other way to get it. So this is where religion begins.

When I live by my own understanding of what is good and what is evil. And I don't want God to give me life and the life within me prompting me to hold back from something. And that life comes to us through the Holy Spirit.

That's why it's important that every person not only receives the Spirit when you're born again, but it's filled with the Holy Spirit. Because that's to be alert to what is living and what is dead. The tree of life we can say is a life full of the Holy Spirit.

And that's what Adam rejected. And that's what God placed in the middle of the garden. And that's what God places in the middle of the church.

The Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit's not recognized in a church, it's most important you'll end up with a so-called good church that's avoiding evil things, doing a lot of good to the community and helping people and all that. But finally the vast majority of that church is going to hell.

That'll be tragic. So let's remember that this is where religiosity and spirituality begins. One more thing I want to say here before I move on.

When Adam and Eve sinned, it says here that the Lord put a flaming sword in front of the tree of life. Up till that time there was no flaming sword.

Before sin came, the tree of life, anybody could, Adam and Eve could access it easily. Just walk up and take. But not now.

As soon as sin came, God put a flaming sword going around and around to guard the tree of life. And it meant that nobody could come to that tree of life now without that sword falling on them and killing all that was of Adam or what we call the flesh. That's the meaning of that symbol there.

That sword fell on Jesus and he took the punishment so that the way to the tree of life is opened. But it also has to fall on this Adamic part of us called the flesh. And that's what Paul says in Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ.

The sword has fallen on me and therefore Christ lives in me. I've come to the tree of life. That's the meaning of Galatians 2.20. It's right here.

The sword of life, the flaming sword has fallen on Christ and on me. I am crucified with Christ. So now I can come to the tree of life.

Christ lives in me. I have his life. And this is why just like we say the Holy Spirit must be central in a spiritual church, the way of the cross must be central in any spiritual church.

You avoid that way, you'll only go to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. You know when I have question answer sessions in different conferences, it's very easy to see when looking at these questions whether these people who ask the questions are interested in knowledge or in life. And I tell you a lot of them are interested in knowledge.

Curious things about why does it say this and this way. We get a lot of emails and the people who answer these emails, I tell them don't waste your time answering questions about knowledge. Christianity is full of people who say why this verse and what does this verse mean and what does that verse mean? Very few who are hungering and how can I have more of the life of God? I wish I could have meet a few people like

that.

Those are the only people I want to meet. I'm not interested in meeting people who want explanations on verses in the Bible. I'm not interested one bit because I know where to lead them to the tree of knowledge of good and evil and to spiritual death.

So when you go to the Bible, seek for life and not for knowledge. And when you share the word, don't share knowledge. You'll kill people.

Share life. Share what God spoke into your heart, brought life into your heart. That's prophecy.

Sharing information and knowledge. It's just like getting up in here and saying two twos are two, four and two threes are six and two fours are eight. It's all true.

It doesn't help anybody spiritually. That's knowledge. So we've got to move on.

Please think about this. Knowledge or life? The second example where you see a contrast is Cain and Abel. Now these folks didn't know anything about religiosity and spirituality, but we can see there with the eyes of the Holy Spirit and the New Testament eyes a principle there in what these two people did.

And it says here about Cain that he brought an offering to the Lord and Abel also. Genesis 4 verse 3 and 4. And like you've heard me say many times, in contrast to what most of Christendom says, there are a lot of things we preach which are very different from most of Christendom. And it's one of them.

Most of Christendom says Abel brought blood, therefore God accepted him. In other words, it doesn't matter how you live, so long as you have blood, he'll accept you. In other words, if Cain had brought a lamb, even though he had bitterness in his heart against Abel, God would accept him.

Absolute rubbish. Jesus said that if you've got something against your brother and you come and bring an offering, even if there's blood in it, God won't accept it. Go and settle that matter with that person and then come.

But it's very clear here. God, the way Christendom reads Genesis 4-3 is like this. See how it can be very subtle, the difference.

It came about in the, I'm sorry, in the last part of verse 4. This is how most of Christendom reads it. And the Lord had regard for Abel's offering, and therefore he had regard for Abel. Wrong.

And the Lord did not have regard for Cain's offering, and therefore he had no regard for Abel. Wrong. Read it carefully.

The Lord had regard for Abel, for the person, therefore he accepted his offering, whatever it was. It was not a sin offering. They were bringing a Thanksgiving offering.

And if you're a businessman running a shop, your Thanksgiving offering is money. If you're a farmer, what you bring is grain. If you're a keeper of flock, you bring sheep.

There's no question of blood there. It's a Thanksgiving offering, and God sees the attitude of heart which brings that offering. All of us who are Christians, who are born again, bring some type of offering to God.

And your offering can be either like Cain's or like Abel's. And you need to see the difference. And there you'll see the difference again between religious people and spiritual people.

So the first one I showed you was knowledge in life. And here I want to put it as maximum and minimum. Abel, it says here, brought the very best of his flock.

Verse 4, Cain just brought an offering. That was the difference that God saw in Abel's heart. I want to give my very best to God.

The very best and the most that I can have. The maximum. What is the maximum I can give to God of my life and everything.

And Cain's attitude is, well, he's not an atheist by the way. He's not a worshipper of idols. It says he brought an offering to Jehovah.

Verse 3, he came to the true God. And you may be coming to Jesus Christ. You're not a non-Christian.

You come to Jesus Christ, but your attitude when you come is, what is the minimum I have to give to be accepted? What is the minimum amount of my life I must give? What is the minimum amount of my time I must give? What is the minimum I have to do to be accepted as a good member in this church where they'll allow me to come for the breaking of bread? What is the minimum of my money that I must give to God? The whole concept is minimum. And that shows they don't love the Lord. If you're always thinking, what is the minimum I have to do for my husband? What's the minimum I have to do in the house? I'll tell you, you don't love your husband at all.

If you say, what is the minimum I have to do for my children? You don't love your children at all. And you're busy on your errands and your other work and your friends and all. What is the minimum I have to do at home? You're not a good wife or a mother.

It's a likewise a husband who says, what's the minimum I have to do to keep my wife happy? You don't love your wife at all. And when a person's attitude to God is, what is the minimum I have to give him some type of offering? After all, he died for me. Okay, here it is.

I want to tell you, my brother, sister, whether you know it or not, you know it today, you're just a religious old person. It's easy to be spiritual. If you love somebody, it's like, what type of wedding gift would you give to a neighbor's son or daughter getting married? I mean, you don't know the neighbor very well, but they give you an invitation and you go for the wedding.

It's normal to give some type of gift. You're not going to give them a check for one lakh rupees or a million rupees. Far from it.

What if your son's getting married? Would you give that cheap gift? What's the difference? This is your son. You may give him a house or a car. But to that neighbor whom you know so little, well, I have to give him something.

I mean, we all think like that. I've got to be decent and let me give a decent gift but not so expensive. I tell you, that is exactly how most Christians treat God.

You have to give him something. Yeah, it must be a little decent. Can't be sort of cheap.

So I'll give him a little bit. That's exactly how Cain came. That is the mark of all religious people.

Minimum. What's the minimum amount of my time I must give to God? I sometimes get letters from people who've said, I've retired from government service. Brother Zach, can I join your organization? I'm willing to take some post there.

And I say, we don't pay any salaries. Never get a reply after that. The guy has spent all his life living for making money in some government service.

Now he wants to make money after he's retired in the name of religion. Can you beat it? This is the type of hypocrisy we find among Christians. But there's plenty of that.

The minimum attitude. And you ask yourself, my brother, sister, whether anything of that. Because that type of religion will gradually make you evil.

It made Cain evil. It made him jealous. If you find yourself in competition with other brothers, like Cain was in competition with Abel.

If you feel jealous that somebody else is being more accepted by you, I'll tell you the reason. Because you're one of those minimum Christians. That's why, otherwise there wouldn't be jealousy there.

Abel was not jealous of Cain. He was quite happy at rest. If there's unrest in your heart, when you think of some other brother or sister, you are a minimum Christian.

If you're disturbed and something good happens to somebody else, you're one of those minimum Christians. The fire fell on Abel's offering and Cain was disturbed. Why? Are you jealous of somebody whom God has blessed? And when you hear something bad about them, are you glad to believe it? Because you're always jealous of that person.

You're a follower of Cain, all right. And you'll end up where Cain ended up. No matter how many meetings you come to in CFC.

I've got to tell you that because I don't want your blood on my hands in the final day. Thirdly, a third example of religion and spirituality is in Abraham having Ishmael and Isaac. And you know how he, God gave him a promise.

He had that promise when he was 75 years old. We read in Genesis 12, I'm going to make you a great nation. He said in where Genesis 12 verse 2. And I'll bless you and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Now how would that happen if he didn't have any children? How was he going to make this man a great nation when he and Sarah had no children? And they went on and on and on 10 years, no children. And finally Sarah, Genesis 16, said hey 10 years gone by, I mean 10 years after they came to Canaan. They've probably been married 40 years, I don't know, no children.

Sarah said, see in God's, God said that the nations, we're going to have a great nation and it hasn't come through me. So the Lord has prevented me, verse 2, from having children. So take my maid, I can obtain children through her and we'll adopt that child as our child.

We'll help God and otherwise God's name will be dishonored. Because God said I'm going to make you a great nation and imagine if we die and no children are there. God's name will be dishonored.

We got to help God out. See that's the attitude of the religious person. I've got to help God out because God's in a tight spot.

So I'll use my cleverness and my power and my wisdom to do something for God. And so they produced a son called Ishmael. You know by the way this started with Abraham using his own wisdom to go to, I don't know whether you realize where this all began.

You know some of these things when you trace it to the root, you find when you don't consult God and you use your own wisdom to do something, it leads to many other problems along the way. We read that God told Abraham to go to Canaan and as soon as he went, it says in Genesis 12 verse 9, he journeyed on in the Negev and as soon as he landed in Canaan there was a famine. Imagine landing up in the place where God told you to come and there's a famine there.

It's like the Apostle Paul, when you read in Acts 16, I don't have time to show it to you. He got a vision one day that a person saying come to Macedonia which is Philippi and help us and he was sure God's leading me to Philippi. So Philippi and Macedonia are the same.

He went to Philippi and the first thing that happens is he's locked up in jail. Now he could have said well did I get that vision from God? When you get a vision from God you end up in jail? Yes because the jailer needs to be converted and I have a feeling that God saw the hunger in a Philippian jailer and wondered how in the world can I reach that Philippian jailer? He'll never go to a meeting. How can I reach that Philippian jailer who's hungry for God? I have a feeling Paul would have said I'm ready to go to jail if I can win a soul.

Would you be ready to go to jail? Have your feet in stocks to win a soul for Christ? God saw there was one man who was willing to go to jail to win souls for Christ. God said okay I'll send him to jail and he went to jail and he was praising the Lord and the Philippian jailer got converted and I have a feeling that Philippian jailer was one of the elders in the church in Philippi later on. Think what would have happened if somebody like Paul was not there who was ready to go to jail, ready to pay any price to serve God.

Those are the ones God uses. The rest of us will just attend meetings and sing songs and drift along on the earth as useless. I want to tell you you should not drift along on this earth as a useless person.

Say to God Lord I want my life to count for eternity. I want my life to be a blessing to others. If I have to go to jail I'm ready to go there if I can build your kingdom.

Be radical. Anyway there was a famine in the land and so immediately without consulting God Abraham went to Egypt Genesis 12 10 and when he came back from Egypt you know who he brought back? An Egyptian servant maid called Hagar. He would never even have seen her in Canaan if he had said oh God there's a famine what shall I do now? There was a famine in Elijah's time.

He didn't run off to some other place. God brought food through the ravens and he could have done that to Abraham too. It's just you know when we use our human wisdom when God has told us to go somewhere and we find it a little difficult and we back out and say no no no that can't be because if God sends us someplace there'll be no difficulty.

Wrong. When God sends us there'll be a lot of difficulties. There'll be mountains but you'll overcome them.

But see the consequences of that. From Hagar came Ishmael. From Ishmael came the entire Arab nation and so many other problems.

So many religions etc. It all started with one man not consulting God. Do you know the consequences of your not consulting God in something can affect your children and grandchildren and so many others? It's true.

It's a wonderful thing if you're a righteous man the blessing flows on to your children and grandchildren and likewise the other way around if you're evil. Anyway they didn't have children so they decided to help God out and got Ishmael and he took Ishmael and said oh God let Ishmael live before you. Will you please accept Ishmael? And God said no.

I will not accept Ishmael. Verse Genesis 17 verse 18 Abraham said to God oh that Ishmael might live before you. Genesis 17 18.

He's a healthy smart strong young man. Can't he be the one through whom I'm going to your promise is going to be fulfilled? God said no. What is produced through your cleverness, through your backsliding, through your going to Egypt when I never told you to go there and through the wisdom of your wife and through your power will never accomplish my purpose.

And so what do we read? Genesis we read in Abraham was 86 years old we read in Genesis 16 verse 16 when Ishmael was born. Genesis 16 last verse Abraham was 86. What's the next verse? Abraham was 99.

Why is it the Holy Spirit just left out blank 13 years in Abraham's life? Nothing. Nothing. God was waiting for the strength of this man that could produce Ishmael to come to zero.

Abraham was not important. He could produce a son. He produced Ishmael.

Sarah was barren but Abraham was not important. God said I'll just wait till this guy gets important and he can't have a son in any case. He himself can't have.

Then he'll trust me. That is the 13 years of waiting and very often God has to wait in our life till the strength of self comes down to zero. Then we will become spiritual.

But as long as we think I'm clever, I'm smart. A lot of people like that you know who come to church and judge the elders and pass opinions about various things in the church. See this church has been going 38 years and I'll tell you something.

The people who have criticized us the most are the ones who have never planted one church in their whole life. It's like bachelors criticizing parents that they're not bringing up their children properly. And after they criticize and leave us they still don't plant one church.

They are the great critics who can sit in their armchairs, do nothing for God and criticize men who are struggling and laboring out in the field to build God's church. Don't be one like that because you'll destroy only yourself like some people have. God waits till all that strength of human cleverness and wisdom comes down to zero.

And when he was 99 years old God said okay I'm going to multiply you Abraham you're important you multiply. How do we know that Abraham was important? You read in Romans chapter 4 I don't have time to show it to you. It says he looked at his own body it was as dead as Sarah's womb.

It was. God said okay. Now when you get a child how will it be? Not through your ability right? And he got Isaac.

See that's the difference between old covenant and new covenant. In the old covenant it's the law. I with my own ability try to keep God's will.

In the new covenant it's the Holy Spirit coming and empowering me. It's like in the old days there was no electricity. The kings in India used to have servants who stood behind the screen and would keep pulling a rope so that the fan would go round and round and round and round and out.

It was by human power. The guy would get exhausted in 15-20 minutes and replaced by another servant. This is life under the law.

Life struggling struggling struggling to overcome sins. Getting exhausted. But think how it is when electricity has come.

Nobody is struggling like that. Of course you got to put on the switch. But then the power takes over.

This is life under the Holy Spirit. In a sense it's almost effortless. I remember the days before I knew what it was to be filled and baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Even preaching a sermon was like the hand pump. Struggling struggling struggling struggling a few drops of water come out. But life in the Holy Spirit is like rivers.

Who pumps a river? It's effortless. God pumps it. That's life in the Holy Spirit.

Dear brothers and sisters. And even overcoming sin. It's not that there's no battle.

But you got to battle with God on your side. That's the difference between Ishmael and Isaac. God's power or my power.

And the end result is when I have done something with my power I get the glory. Abraham how did you get Ishmael? He stretches out his chest and says that's me. And you ask the same Abraham how did you get Isaac? His head is bowed.

If you can do something and you're pretty proud of it you can be pretty sure it is Ishmael. Are you proud of something you have done for the Lord? Some bible study you take somebody you brought to the Lord. Somebody you prayed for and he accidentally got healed.

And you're pretty proud of it. That's your power your glory. And it's God's power.

He will shrink away and say that was all of God. It was all of God. That's the difference.

So you can examine in your life all the things you take credit for. You know how smart you are in your work. You're smart right? You're not stupid like some of these other fellas.

Yeah you're smart. All the Ishmaels you produce. The lack of humility.

A man who serves God in the power of the Holy Spirit cannot be proud of anything. He cannot be proud of his preaching. He cannot be proud of his singing.

He cannot be proud of his playing instruments. He cannot be proud of his ministry or planting churches or anything. Remember this.

What you're proud of is what you did yourself. It's Ishmael. It'll never live before God.

It'll be cast out forever. It's soulish. It's religious.

It's not spiritual. It's very important to understand this. A lot of missionary work is done like this.

Out there there are people dying. What are you doing sitting around here making money? Go and serve them. The fella says okay I'll go.

God hasn't called him. He feels I can go and lead those heathen to Christ. Really? Go and try.

And that's how you see such a lot of confusion in Christian work today. Because they've gone on their own and when they go on their own they need money. You never read in the Bible of anybody Jesus or the apostles ever telling people I'm going to serve the Lord.

Will you guys please support me financially? That is a modern phenomenon. In the last 200 years people have started doing that particularly in America. They go around asking people to sponsor them for God's work because God's helpless.

So these rich people have to help them. They go to rich people. They know the poor people have got almost no money to give so they go to the rich people.

Will you give money because I'm going to do God's work? What about God? Is your God rich or poor? Well my God is poor so you better help me. You guys are richer than God. You got to help me otherwise I can't do God's work.

It's all Ishmael. And who gets the glory? Those rich fellows who finance that mission or that church. They've never been interested.

I remember when we started the first people who left our church were the rich people. Through the years it's always happened. Rich people tend to be proud of their wealth as if they're supporting the church.

I've seen through the years who are the people who have financed this church. You'd be surprised. It's sacrificial people who've learned to give the maximum to God and we don't care for those who think that we care for who think that they're very wealthy and they're blessing the church.

No because then they'll get the glory. We'll make sure that in this church only God gets the glory. Nobody else.

Only God. That's why we don't honor rich people. We honor those who are spiritually minded, who are humble, who are God-fearing and who depend upon God.

Here's the fourth example now. In the book of Numbers you read about the children of Israel coming to the promised land. And when they come to the promised land we read they send some spies, 12 spies into the country to see.

The spies went up and down through the land and came back and said in Numbers 13 that the land is a beautiful land. In fact the grapes are so heavy that two people had to carry a branch of those grapes. It says that in a single cluster, a single cluster of grapes.

Numbers 13 23 they had to two people had to carry it. It was a wonderful land but they said but verse 28 we saw the descendants of Anak, the giants living there. No we can't go in there.

They'll kill us. But Caleb and Joshua they quieted the people in verse 30 and said no let's go in and take it. And the men said no no we can't go in.

Verse 31, Numbers 13 31. They're too strong for us. And they spread scary rumors across all the people saying hey the land is great but the giants are huge and we look like grasshoppers in their sight.

Verse 33. Then all the congregation cried and they got upset with Moses and Aaron. Why have you brought us here to a land which is full of giants? And Moses and Aaron fell on their face.

Verse chapter 14 verse 5. And Joshua and Caleb stood up and they said hey the land is a good land. Verse 8. If the Lord is pleased with us he'll bring those giants down. Why are you afraid of them? They don't have any protection.

They're just like bread for us. And they wouldn't listen. 600,000 people stood against two godly men.

Joshua and Caleb. You know there were two people there who were concerned for God's honor. God will be dishonored if he told us to take the land of Canaan and we say we're scared.

And we allow the giants to rule the Canaan when God says it's my land. I promised it to Abraham. And 600,000 people are concerned about their own safety.

Oh what will happen to us? What will happen to us? I better take care of my own safety. I don't know whether you, your attitude of mind, is your safety or God's honor. Supposing a choice comes in your some situation in your life where it's your safety, your life, or God's honor.

Which would you choose? A religious person would say hey I'm going to protect my life. I want to live long on this earth. The spiritual person would say if God's name is going to be dishonored I don't care about my life.

I don't want God to be dishonored. And you'll face situations like that. I remember years ago during the time of that, sometime when there were some riots up in the north because of the mosque being destroyed or something.

There were people stopping the scooters on the streets of one of those cities and telling people to say Jai to some Hindu God's name. And if you didn't do it they deflate your tires. That is a small punishment.

What would you do there? A bold Christian said Jai Masiki. Praise the Lord Jesus Christ. I can handle a deflated tire.

What's there? It could be worse. God's honor. Jesus said if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this sinful generation I will be ashamed of him.

I've also worked in government service in the navy and I met believers there who didn't want it to be too well known that they were believers. And so there's a tradition in the navy to serve alcohol at officers functions. I was the one officer who said no I'm not going to serve any alcohol at all.

Sorry. You can give me a bad report or make me unpopular. Doesn't make a difference.

Small things God will test you to see whether you seek the honor of men. I've seen in many government offices, banks, somebody beside his table he'll have a calendar with some non-Christian idols picture. Where will you find a Christian sitting at his table with a Christian calendar with a verse? I've almost never seen it in any government office.

On my table I had a bible and tracts in a government office. I didn't give it out to people but if people wanted said what is that I see you can take one. You know it makes a lot of difference when God sees that you are not ashamed of Jesus Christ.

That you're shouting loudly about Jesus Christ is not just in the church service where you raise your hands and yell and all that. But in that place where it's unpopular to be a witness for Christ to let everybody know she belonged to Christ that my own safety and my own promotion and my all that is unimportant. Religious people look for all those things.

A spiritual person is only concerned about God's honor because his prayer is our father who art in heaven give me my promotion no hallowed be your name. Number one request. Everything else is secondary Lord.

I don't care for I have no other request hallowed be your name. So that's what Joshua and Caleb were concerned about and the other ones who possess the land. And if you find some brothers and sisters get on with God and are mightily used by God and accomplish things for God you can be pretty sure they made some decisions in their life.

Where you backed out they went forward. They risked their life. They risked their job.

They were not ashamed of Christ. I don't mean in a foolish way. A lot of people witness foolishly make fools of themselves.

I don't mean that but in a wise way to stand up for Jesus Christ without being ashamed. To be concerned about God's honor and I believe we'll face that even more and more in the days to come and there you'll find the difference between the religious and the spiritual. The religious believe God will help me.

You know for example you're in a tight spot in your office one day. You did something wrong and nobody in your knows that you did it. And it's very easy to tell a lie and say I don't know who did it because the devil whispers in your heart a lie is almighty.

You can get out of this situation. A lie will get you out of it. And the Holy Spirit says a lie is not almighty.

God is almighty. Speak the truth and shame the devil. And so when you're asked you say I'm sorry sir.

I messed up that. I ruined that machine. Well I may be sacked.

Fine. God is almighty for speaking the truth. God will honor me.

Can you tell me anybody in the world who God did not honor because he spoke the truth? Can you tell me somebody whom God honored because he told a lie? It's never happened in 6,000 years. History is on our side. If we honor God he honors us.

Then I want to go to number five. Another example is Saul and David. You know what Saul's qualification was? His physical appearance.

It says in 1 Samuel 9 and verse 2 that this man Saul who was the first king of Israel was a handsome man. There was not a more handsome person among the sons of Israel. He was like a film star.

And you know how children who grow up whether boy or girl grow up were extremely good looking. They are so aware how handsome they are. And he grew up like that.

And he was taller than any other people. And tall people have you know looked down on others physically as well. It says when he stood among the people his head was above everybody else's.

He was at least about nine inches taller than all the others. That distinguished Saul. His head.

That was the big thing about him. His brain. I remember once one tall brother was being baptized here and he didn't go in fully.

I said put him in again because this upper part is the thing that really ought to die. Otherwise he comes out without that upper part buried. He'll be a nuisance all through his life.

That's the part of us which we depend on. Our head. Our cleverness.

David was different. It says about David when Saul was rejected Samuel told David and once Samuel told Saul and one Samuel 13. Saul your kingdom will not endure but the Lord is looking for a man after his own heart.

That was David. Heart. That's what distinguished David.

Head. That's what distinguished Saul. And you.

You may be distinguished by your head, your cleverness, your smartness, your intelligence, how you know everything that's going on or by your heart of love and goodness and kindness and mercy. That's what David had. And you know religious people are distinguished by their head, their cleverness.

They stand out among the people and if they belong to a nation that is very powerful like the United States you see it in those people. They're pretty proud. Even the Christians.

That I belong to a nation that's head and shoulders over everybody else. And God doesn't care for that. Man looks on the head.

God looks at the heart. It's your heart that's important. It's your heart attitude towards God, towards people.

That shows whether you're religious or not. Not your head. Don't boast in your mind and your cleverness and how much you can understand.

How much you can explain. How you can wangle your way out of difficult situations with your cleverness. It doesn't count one bit for God.

With God. It's your heart. He always sees what's this man's heart like.

And if you want to know what's in your heart. Somebody asked me once how can I know what's in people's heart. I said just listen to what they talk about.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Whatever a man speaks about most of the time that is where his heart is. If he's talking about money or politics or other things that's where his heart is.

I mean for a couple of hours on Sunday he may talk religious stuff. His heart is not in it. He's a man of the head.

Then number six. We come to the New Testament and that's a clear contrast which we don't need to think about much. It's between the Pharisees and Jesus.

The Pharisees are religious and Jesus was spiritual and all the four Gospels explain that. The Pharisees were particular about the law legalists. You got to keep this.

You got to do that. You got to do this other thing and Jesus was different. The difference was this.

The Pharisees had a human righteousness. Jesus had a divine righteousness which came from God. A righteousness that's produced by man is mostly external.

Divine righteousness is primarily inward. If I can control my tongue and not get angry it could be human righteousness. There are Buddhists who can do that.

There are people who practice yoga who can do that. But divine righteousness gets rid of anger from the heart. In Ecclesiastes it says anger is in the heart of a fool.

Only God can get rid of it there. Just because I control my tongue that's good. At least you don't hurt others.

But don't think that makes you that's divine righteousness. It is not. That just makes you a good Pharisee.

Ask God to give you divine righteousness where the anger is removed from your heart. External righteousness is what characterized the Pharisees. Divine righteousness comes from within.

Everything. Remember that brothers and sisters. Anything that you have which is only on the outside is human righteousness.

Because it doesn't come from within. I sometimes picture it like a man who's got a tree which is all producing withered mangoes every time. So to fool people he buys a whole lot of good mangoes from the market and ties it up very cleverly in that tree.

I say wow. People say what a wonderful mango tree you got. He knows the truth.

It's not from within. Do you know that a righteousness that you have and a lot of good works that you have that people appreciate and your hospitality and your kindness for which you want to get a name for yourself. It's Phariseeism.

Pharisees when they do something they want people to notice it whether it's prayer or fasting or doing something good. Jesus would heal a person say don't tell anybody about it. You see the difference? Isaiah 45 15 says God is a God who hides himself.

And that's the characteristic of a spiritual man. He can do good and not let anybody know about it. He'll keep quiet about it because his righteousness is divine.

He lives before God's face. He's not bothered about man's opinion. Pharisees were so concerned.

People must have a good impression about me. You come to this church and you want people to have a good impression about you. I want to say to you you're on the road to being a first class Pharisee.

I hope you'll get out of that and say Lord I want to follow Jesus who could do things in secret and bless thousands of people and never talk about it. Do you find Jesus ever talking about the one he healed over there or somebody you raised from the dead over there? These modern day healers who are humbugs talk about all that. The Pharisees would boast about it not Jesus.

He lived before his father's face. Religious people are keen that other people should know what they're doing for God. And when you come together with them like Martha they're talking about their work and what they did where they went and the Bible studies they conducted and their home groups and this and that and the other.

Spiritual people talk about Jesus. How wonderful Jesus is. You can find out where you are.

And finally we come to the end of the Bible. Babylon and Jerusalem. And I don't have time to show you all those verses but you read Revelation 17 and 18.

It talks about Babylon. It's called a harlot and the bride. Jerusalem.

The harlot is involved in impressing and being involved with all the big people in the world. When Christians want to get involved with political leaders that's Babylon. Revelation 17.

The beast is the political leadership. The woman is the religious leadership. And the woman riding the beast is a picture of religion and politics coming together.

You see that in our country with different religions. They have their own political parties. And when Christian preachers get up to have a big big meeting they want some political leader to sit on their platform.

Totally unconverted godless man. That's Babylon. If you read Revelation 17 that's exactly what I see on some platforms.

They don't want to get the most godly man in town to sit there. They'll get the most important political leader. It's like Jesus getting Herod and Pilate to sit on his platform and saying Herod would you please come and introduce me to this politics.

This is today's Christianity. It's all nonsense. And yet there are Christians who sit to their mouth open wondering these are men of God.

They're not men of God. When will your eyes be open? Babylon. And the other thing in Revelation 18 is Babylon is it's filled with demons.

It says in verse 2 it's become the dwelling place of demons. You know there are evil spirits operating in religious Christianity. That's the scary part.

Religious Christians can have evil spirits operating among them. It says you're the dwelling place of demons. Babylon.

Revelation 18 2. And glorifying oneself verse 7 she says in her heart I'm a queen and I'll never see morning. And so on and it's called great great great great Babylon. But Jerusalem on the other hand is called in Revelation 21 the holy city.

Revelation 21 verse 2. That's the difference. Greatness and holiness. The harlot and the bride.

The harlot decorating itself to be impressive to the world. And the bride in simplicity living before God. And all of us are moving in one of these directions.

Let me give you one little picture of Jerusalem in closing. Turn to Revelation 21 verse 16. Book of Revelation is full of pictures and here is a beautiful picture.

The whole book is full of symbols and here's a beautiful symbol 21 16. It says here that the city which is a picture of the church is laid out as a square. Length is as great as its width and the height the length and width and height are equal.

Now I wonder how I can illustrate that. The length and width and height are equal. So here let me I wasn't prepared for this.

Okay here is something. It's a square hopefully. Length and width are equal.

But if you don't know the depth of this I could fool you that it is a cube. If you want to know whether it's a cube or not I got to turn it around show you there's got no depth. This is religious Christianity.

No depth. Big. All that God has to do in the final day is just turn us around and show people how much depth you have.

They'll get a shock. Was that all there was in your life? Paper thin. Depth to your Christianity.

But it doesn't matter if you're not a big square. Supposing you're only this size. Much smaller.

Be a cube. Or you're even smaller than that. Small square.

But be a cube. Let there be as much depth as impression you give to others of your spirituality. Otherwise you're a hypocrite.

You're religious. You won't be a part of Jerusalem. Every stone that fits in Jerusalem is going to be a cube.

There's nobody like this. There's going to be without depth. That's why it's important brothers and sisters to live before God.

To have depth in your private life before God as much as the impression you give. Don't give a bigger impression before people when there's only thinness in your depth in your life. Then give a smaller impression to people about your spirituality because then at least you'll be a cube.

So start with depth. If your depth is one inch make sure your square is also one inch. You present yourself to people not as a great mighty man or woman of God.

No. I'm only this much. That's all the depth I have.

You'll be a part of Jerusalem. You don't have to be big but you have to be a cube. You have to be honest.

I hope you've learned something today. Let's bow before God. Let's bow before God and pray.

Heavenly Father as we bow before you help us to take these things seriously because our eternal destiny depends on it and there are not many places where people can hear the truth. Help us to take it seriously we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/y8U2CNXLOTw.mp4>
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