

Keep a Good Conscience

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a good conscience and aligning one's life with the will of God to prepare for eternity.

Duration: 54:06

Scripture: Matthew 7:21, Acts 24:14

Topics: "Conscience And Obedience", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of doing the will of God and maintaining a blameless conscience before Him and men. It highlights the danger of living in sin, the significance of a sensitive conscience, and the need to prioritize spiritual growth by focusing on keeping a clear conscience. The speaker urges believers to follow the example of Paul in striving to be ready for the first resurrection by doing their best to live in obedience to God's will.

Transcript

So, like we were saying in our last session, I want to speak to you like speaking to a family. Most of you believe in Jesus as your Lord. And any correction or rebuke, please accept it as not from a teacher but from a father.

That's how we seek to preach God's word in the church. So, let's turn again to that passage we were looking at that will take place in that day. The first time that Jesus spoke about that day, So, Matthew 7, verse 22 and 23.

In that day, when many, many, many will stand before him. And they will say, Lord, Lord. And he said in verse 21, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

He who does the will of my father in heaven. Doing the will of the father is the opposite of sin. When he says in verse 23, depart from me, you who practice sin.

That is people who did not do the will of the father. Then what did they do? They did their own will. See, we have two options whenever we are tempted.

Do the will of God or do my own will. It's the same option that Eve had when she faced the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden. She stood before that tree.

And the devil came through a snake and told her to eat it. And she had an option, one of two things. Either I do what God has told me.

Don't eat of it. Or what every desire in my body says, this is good for you, take it. Don't worry about the consequences of it.

Think of your present satisfaction. What will make you happy right now? Do you know that in every temptation that is what you face? What will satisfy you now? Don't think about the future. And the thought came into Eve's mind saying, hey, God has said you will die if you eat of this.

The devil is quick to say, no, no, no, you will not die, don't worry. You know that was the first lie, is the first lie mentioned in the Bible? Do you know that, the first lie that you find in the Bible? Genesis chapter 3. The thought came into Eve's mind. Verse 3. Chapter 3, verse 3. God has said you will die.

As soon as that thought comes, the devil says, no, you will definitely not die. If you want to know what is the first lie found in scripture, here it is, Genesis 3, verse 4. It's very important for us to understand. You know Jesus said in John 8, verse 44, The devil is a liar.

He has been a liar from the beginning. What is the lie he said in the beginning? Here it is. You can sin and you will not be punished.

You can sin and you will not be punished. And there is no need to take sin seriously. And the devil says, yes, whatever a man sows, he will reap.

But you can always confess it, the blood of Jesus is there to cleanse you. But you can always confess it, the blood of Jesus is there to cleanse you. Do you think that only the Holy Spirit speaks about the blood of Jesus? And the devil also says this.

And the devil says this many times in the lives of believers. Not after they commit sin. No, before they commit sin.

Before they commit sin, the devil says, the blood of Jesus will cleanse you, don't worry. Whether it's a young person trying to cheat in an examination. Whether it's a young person trying to cheat in an examination.

Cheat and you can pass. Then confess your sin, you will be cleansed. Then you have passed an examination and also been cleansed.

And you won't die. The first lie in scripture. For 6,000 years the devil has been telling even believers and unbelievers that lie.

To all people. Especially to believers nowadays. You won't suffer.

There will be no punishment. You can watch that pornography on the internet. It's ok.

Only one minute. Two minutes, three minutes. I know you are bothered about it.

But don't worry. The blood of Jesus is there. Who is saying that? The devil.

Imagine the devil talking about the blood of Jesus. Before you commit that sin. The blood of Jesus will cleanse you, so go ahead.

Do you know how many believers there are in the world who listen to the devil and do that? It's a part of that first lie. Sin is not serious. First lie in the bible.

Sin is not serious. Doing God's will is not the most important thing. If you can enjoy something, forget about God's will.

Enjoy it. You know how sometimes you enjoy getting angry at somebody? Anger is a sin. Why do you do it then? Because you enjoy expressing your anger to your husband or your wife or somebody.

And you feel a little happy after you have said it. You know, we won't do things that make us miserable. There is a delight in watching pornography.

There is a delight in getting angry at somebody. There is a delight in saying, I'll never forgive that person no matter what he does. There is a delight in it.

But you ask a believer, don't you know it's wrong? Yeah, they know the verses. He knew God had said, don't eat of that tree. And he knows that he doesn't have to eat of that tree.

So the devil said to him, it's not serious. Just do it. And ask for forgiveness.

And the devil says, don't forget the blood of Jesus. Am I telling you stories that you have never heard, that you have not experienced in your life? How do I know this? Because I went that way myself. In the days when I did not fear God, I think of my life more than 40 years ago.

I was defeated. Even though I was a believer. The only thing that saved me was one day I got fed up of my defeated life.

Not one day, but over a period of time, I got fed up, fed up, fed up with my defeated life. Have you got fed up of your defeated life? That's the way you can be ready for Christ's coming. See, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11, in verse 28, Come to me all who are laboured, weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

See, some people say anybody can come to Jesus. No. Whom did he invite? Those who are weary and heavy laden because of their sin.

Or those who are fed up of their sin. Those are the people he said, come to me. So, I don't believe everybody can come to Jesus.

I mean, if you want material blessings, then it's another thing. Jesus once said, your father makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil people. And he sends the rain on the righteous people and the unrighteous people.

Sun and rain. Material blessings. You can be good or evil, you'll get it.

Righteous or unrighteous, you'll get it. See, those days people were farmers. So, here is a very God-fearing farmer.

He prays for sun and rain on his fields. And he gets sun and rain. Answer to prayer.

Next door to him is an atheist farmer. He doesn't believe in God. He says, there is no God.

He doesn't pray. He doesn't pray for sun, he doesn't pray for rain on his fields. But he gets sun and rain on the fields.

And that atheist farmer gets as good a crop as this believer farmer. Yeah, it's like in the examinations, those who cheat get good marks, sometimes better marks than those who don't cheat. Does that mean God is blessing them? Some people think, I got good marks in exam, that means God blessed me.

But that guy who cheated got better marks than you. Did God bless him? Remember, material blessings are not the proof of God's approval. Businessmen who cheat make more money than honest businessmen.

So don't think making money is a proof of God's blessing. No. Don't think passing in an examination is God's blessing.

Because as I said, those who cheat pass. It's very important to understand this. I believe the only proof that God is really blessing you is that He is giving you light on the sin in your life.

And giving you a hatred for it. Are you one of those who is getting light on the sin in your life and getting a hatred for it? Then even if you are earning only three thousand rupees a month, you are really blessed. Because that is ultimately what is going to matter when you stand in that day.

Turn again to Matthew chapter 7, where Jesus spoke about that day. So I want you to see four things here. Four things.

Number one, verse 21, is doing God's will. He who does the will of my Father. Number two, prophesying in Jesus' name.

Number three, casting out demons in Jesus' name. Number four, doing miracles in Jesus' name. I want all four in my life.

I preached for many years in Jesus' name. Cast out many demons in Jesus' name. And experienced many miraculous answers to prayer in my life also.

But all of these will be no use if that first thing is not true in my life. That I seek to do the will of my Father in heaven. That if suddenly the Lord comes, I don't have to change the direction of my life.

That if I die tonight and go to heaven, I don't have to change the direction of my life. I was pleasing God on earth and I continue pleasing God in heaven. Think of these other three things.

I'm not going to preach in heaven. Nor am I going to cast out demons in heaven. There will be no miracles to be done in heaven.

But the first one is for eternity. Doing the will of God. Now and for all eternity.

Please remember this. What is the difference between a child and an adult? One difference is this. A child does not think about the future.

His whole life is occupied with the present. As we grow up, we think more about the future. That's why three year olds don't want to go to school.

They cry when we ask them to go to school. Adults say education is important. What is the reason the child doesn't think of the future? What is the reason? Because children don't think about their future.

Children like to play with toys. And when they grow up, they go out to play. And they don't watch movies to prepare for tomorrow's exam.

And they watch television. Because they don't think of the future. An adult thinks of the future.

All of you who got good jobs, you got good jobs because you studied when you were a student. And maybe you were not serious. Your parents forced you to study.

It's the same way with spiritual children and spiritual adults. One who is a spiritual child, he only thinks of right now. He doesn't think about eternity.

He doesn't think about how will it be in eternity if I live like this right now. He doesn't think about how will it be in eternity if I live like this right now. A 3 year old child never thinks about what will happen to him in 30 years if he doesn't study today.

He doesn't worry about that. Yes, when I am 30 years old, I will think about it. Right now, I want to play with my toys.

I don't want to go to school. And in the same way, a child who is a spiritual child, they also think like this. And they don't think about that day when Lord Jesus Christ will come and about the eternal life.

And right now, I am enjoying these things. What will happen if I tell a few lies and make some money? Everybody in my office is signing those false statements and making money, so why can't I also do it? I used to work in the Navy for a number of years. So many times in my life, I had to stand against my senior officers.

I had only two stripes on my shoulder. And I had to stand before people who had three and four stripes. And I said, I am sorry sir, I am a Christian, I can't do that.

Have you ever faced a situation like that in your office or school or somewhere? Where you have to stand before your boss and say, I am sorry sir, I can't do that, I am a Christian. It goes against my conscience. Once when I said that about some matter to my senior officer, he was a commander.

He said, if you are in the Navy, you better forget about your conscience. I am sorry sir, I can't do that. So, what happens? Once I got transferred from my job in half an hour, or they will not write a good recommendation for my promotion at the end of the year.

In other words, in this life, I suffer some loss. But in eternity, in that day, when I stand in that day before the Lord, and the Lord reviews my life, and the Lord puts on a screen, the videotape of my life, and He sees me standing there for my conscience. And I lost promotion.

I got some inconvenience, I was transferred. Some other difficulties. A lot of people laughed at me.

In that day, the Lord will be proud of me. And I will say, Lord, I am so happy, I took that decision that day. But what happens if in that day, the Lord shows the videotape of your life? All your private life.

And He sees how you compromised here and totalized there, just to get some gain in the world. Do you think about that day? Or are you like the three-year-old who says, forget about the future? On one side, there is doing the will of God. On the other side, there are not only these three things I mentioned.

Preaching, casting out demons, performing miracles, and a hundred other things. Doing good, serving people, taking care of your children, taking care of your family. All that you do, but in your private life, you don't do the will of God.

You know it is sin, and you do it. Eve knew that is against God's will, eating that tree. From that tree.

But I am going to do it, because it pleases me. Don't you know that when you are going to do something wrong? Even as you get angry, your conscience says, that's wrong. Even as you click on that computer screen and watch that pornography, your conscience tells you, that's not right.

If it's right, why do you have to look around to see if anybody is watching you? Nobody is watching me. But Jesus is right there. That doesn't make a difference to you? You are not concerned that it makes him sad, so long as you enjoy yourself.

These are people who don't think of that day. We need every encouragement to stay away from sin in the evil world in which we live. How to be ready for the second coming of Christ? And for the first resurrection.

Turn with me to Acts of the Apostles, chapter 24. Paul was standing in a court before a king as a criminal. And Jews were accusing him.

And he tells them. He tells the king. In verse 14.

The last part. That was the Bible of those days, 39 books of the Old Testament. So what he is saying, I believe everything written in the Bible.

You want to be ready for the last days? Say, Lord, I believe everything written in the Bible. And he says, especially one thing. Among all the things written, I believe this especially.

That there will definitely, certainly, be two resurrections. One of the righteous and the other of the wicked. Two resurrections.

There is no doubt about it. Certainly. He doesn't just say there will be a resurrection.

He says there will certainly be a resurrection. Of the righteous and the wicked. So you say, Paul, which one do you want to be in? Do you want to be in the resurrection of the righteous or the resurrection of the wicked? You ask Paul.

Paul says, definitely. I want to be in the resurrection of the righteous. In that day, there will be a resurrection of the righteous.

I want to be there. And so you say, Paul, how are you going to make sure you are going to be in that resurrection? Today, if you ask people, how will you make sure you will be in the first resurrection? They say, well, I accepted Christ some years ago. So I will definitely be in that resurrection.

Isn't that what some of you will answer? I want to ask you that question. How do you know that in that day, you will be in the first resurrection of the righteous? You say, because I accepted Christ 20 years ago. I

know there are a lot of sins I am living in, but I accepted Christ 20 years ago.

Not accidental sins, but deliberate sins. There are like that in my life. I watch pornography now and then.

I get angry quite often. Sometimes a few things, I have to do something unrighteous in my office, otherwise you can't live in this world. I have to sign a few false statements.

Otherwise, how can we live? I lose my job. But that's not what Paul said. Paul didn't say, I accepted Christ on the Damascus road.

Paul, how are you going to be sure you will be in the first resurrection? He gives the answer in the next verse. Verse 16 Because there is going to be a resurrection of the righteous. Because there is going to be a resurrection of the righteous.

I do my best to always maintain a blameless conscience before God and before men. He doesn't just say, I keep a good conscience. He says, I do my best to keep a good conscience.

What does it mean to do my best? Think of a student who is diligent to pass some final examination. Sitting up at night till 2 o'clock in the morning studying. And the next day, and the next day.

What's he doing? He is doing his best to come first in the class. Or think of this businessman who has already made so much money. And he wants to expand his business here and there in other cities.

He is doing his best to expand his business. Many entertainments other people have time for, he has no time for. That student who wants to come first in the class, he has no time to go around playing games because the examination is coming next week.

These are people who want to do their best. Student or businessman. They give up many temporary pleasures because they have got a goal before them.

That's why they sacrifice many things. Even food, they quickly eat up and go. Because they want to sit down for their studies or do something in their business.

They are doing their best. Their whole mind is taken up with, I must come first in my class. I must expand my business, I must make more money.

There is a picture of doing your best. Now Paul has the same attitude to keeping a good conscience. He is not aiming to come first in the class.

He has got very little money but he is happy with that, he is not trying to make more money. But he has got a goal. I want to be in the first resurrection.

The resurrection of the righteous. In that day I want to stand before my Lord who died for me. So I do my best.

Just one thing. To keep my conscience clear. God and before me.

See, conscience is the first voice of God in our life. Before we read the Bible, before we are born again, before we are filled with the Spirit. The first voice of God that every people of every religion hear.

That little children hear. A little three year old has got a conscience. It knows when it did something that mummy told it not to do.

It knows it did something wrong. And you can see the guilt on the face. When mummy asks, did you do that? Without answering itself you can see the guilt on that three year old's face.

Whichever religion he may be. You know what that is? Conscience. Making that child feel guilty.

I did what mummy told me not to do. And when mummy asked me, I told a lie. But you can see on his face.

He is telling a lie but his whole face is saying, I am telling a lie. You see that little children. But you see that same child when he is eighteen years old.

He can look as if he is speaking the absolute truth and tell a big lie. Don't you all know how to do that? We all have learnt it. How is it we started when three year old with guilt written on our face.

But now we can tell a lie to anybody, to our boss or anybody else. And make people really believe that is the truth. You know why? Because we have killed our conscience.

We have hit it and hit it so much the voice has become so soft. We don't hear it. If you keep going that way you can kill it.

It will never speak to you anymore. You know what is the most precious gift God gives a baby when he is born? Doctors look for ten fingers, two eyes and all that. But the most precious gift God gives that child is a conscience.

And if you are a good parent, more than the fingers and the eyes, you will teach that child to keep a good conscience. I have seen children who tell lies, disrespect their parents and the parents say, Oh he is only a child. But little tigers become big tigers, don't forget that.

Little snakes become big snakes. Conscience is the most precious thing that you need to develop in a child. So if we live like that with a dead conscience, it's like a weighing machine, spoiled.

Spoiled completely. You put one thousand kilos on it, the needle doesn't even move. Completely dead.

That's a conscience. And then we ask Jesus to come into our heart. We are born again.

And suddenly one of the first things he does is make that conscience a little alive. Now when we put the thousand tons, oh the needle is moving a little bit. But it should not remain there.

If we walk with the Lord, that weighing machine will become more and more sensitive. Now you put five hundred kilos, it is moving. Then you put hundred kilos and it is moving, the needle.

And you put one kilo and the needle is moving. And you put one gram and the needle is moving. What a wonderful thing that is, a conscience that is becoming more and more sensitive to sin.

That is the only way you can assess whether you are growing spiritually or not. Not how much of the Bible you know. Which created being knows the Bible best? The devil.

He knows the Bible so well that he quoted a verse to Jesus in the temptation. So don't try to think you can compete with the devil in Bible knowledge. But he doesn't have a good conscience.

So Bible knowledge does not mean you have a good conscience. And the devil is the proof of that. A little four year old child not knowing the Bible can have a good conscience.

So God's will is when we are born again that little by little our conscience becomes more sensitive. And God doesn't ask you to live by the standard of some very mature saint. And God doesn't want us to have a conscience like some very good, pure devotee.

No. Maybe you are in the first standard. Your conscience is not so sensitive.

Doesn't matter. Because you were born again only last week. You are just beginning your education.

Good. Live at your level. But get 100% in first standard.

That's good. According to your conscience, keep clear. But don't remain in the same class next year.

You must go to second standard. Your conscience must be now making you sensitive to other things which you were not sensitive to last year. And then you go to third standard.

And fourth standard. This is the only test of spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is not you know the Bible better, you can preach better.

Or you go to more meetings. What is going to matter in the final day? The Lord is not going to ask you how many meetings you went to. Or how many sermons you preached.

Or how much you served Him. Did you go by your conscience? Why does He tell them, you lived in sin, depart from Me. How could they live in sin? Only by killing your conscience, that's the only way to live in sin.

That's the only way. That means these people killed their conscience, killed their conscience and killed their conscience. But they satisfied themselves, they are preaching, they are casting out demons, they are doing so many things for the Lord.

Remember what I told you. In these IIT training institutes they don't teach you to play cricket and football. Because they know that will not come in the final exam.

They teach them chemistry, physics and mathematics. Subjects like that which will come in the final exam. So if you are a sensible person.

And you want to prepare for that IIT exam. You will try to concentrate on the subjects which are important, which are coming in that day. By all means go and play cricket and football, but don't make that your main thing in life.

So in the same way, let's preach. Let's cast out demons. Let's do good, let's serve the Lord, let's give out tracts.

But concentrate on the most important thing. Your conscience. That he does not have to say you lived in sin.

Paul knows that. So he says, I want to be ready for that day. So I am going to keep my conscience absolutely blameless before God and before men.

That means as soon as I am aware I have done something wrong. I will immediately go and confess it to God. That is the mark of a sensitive conscience.

How is it when a mosquito comes and bites you on your hand? Immediately your other hand goes and wipes it off. You don't let watch it and let it keep on biting you for some time and then think about it. If you got leprosy in your hand, you won't even feel the mosquito biting you.

You don't have any sensation. If you are walking in a field and you get a thorn in your foot, what do you do? You don't think about it saying, what shall I do about that? You stop everything and pull it out. Have you ever got a thorn in your foot? Try and think how much time delay was there between your feeling that and your pulling it out.

People with leprosy can keep that thorn for days and not even know it is there. If you get an injury in your hand, how long before you try and do something about it? These are all the indications of sensitive skin. What about your conscience? Far more important than skin.

Paul kept that clear. Anything his conscience said, that's wrong before God. He never says, oh but that fellow doesn't think it's wrong and that fellow doesn't think it's wrong.

It doesn't matter. My conscience tells me it's wrong. Why does it matter what he thinks about it? I am in 10th standard, he is in 1st standard.

So I have to live by a higher standard than him. Do you know that the conscience of all believers is not at the same level? Some people their conscience moves only when you put 500 kilos on it. Others have developed their conscience so much that one milligram and the needle moves.

How did they come there? Because they always did their best to be ready for the first resurrection. Paul was like that. That's why his life was so effective for God.

That's why he could say at the end of his life, I have fought a good fight. Against what? He wasn't fighting with people. He never fought with people.

He fought against sin and against the devil, that's all. He said I fought a good fight. And I have kept the faith.

I didn't go against my faith. Part of faith is a good conscience. And I am ready to meet the Lord who will give me a crown of righteousness, he says.

That's why Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. Unfortunately there are very few preachers today who can say like Paul, follow me as I follow Christ. I want to follow Paul as he followed Christ.

I want to follow Paul as he followed Christ. And I want to follow any man who can say, I follow Paul like he followed Christ. Follow me as I follow Christ.

Brother, sister, that is how you should be. That's how you should be to all your younger brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't just preach the Bible to them.

Say, follow me as I follow Christ. Don't follow this common expression, oh don't look at me, look at Jesus. Don't say, don't depend on me, but depend on Jesus.

That is good. But we should be able to say, look at my example and follow me. Why is it we don't have more examples like that? Because the devil has done such a tremendous work in Christianity.

That he has made people take sin very casually. So the whole purpose of having a meeting like this is to help us to be ready for the coming of the Lord. We will think more about this after lunch.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to remember what we hear all our days in Jesus' name. Thank you.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/xdOO0YeRaPY.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/keep-a-good-conscience/>

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