

# (Knowing God's Way) 7. Every Church Must Have a Doorkeeper

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a doorkeeper in the church to preserve its purity and to bring backsliders to an awareness of their true condition and back to the Lord.*

**Topics:** "Spiritual Vigilance", "Church Leadership"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the critical role of doorkeepers in the church, highlighting their responsibility to protect the congregation from false teachings and spiritual corruption. He explains that doorkeepers, often elders, must remain vigilant and prioritize God's glory over personal reputation, as neglecting this duty can lead to the church being overrun by 'savage wolves.' Poonen warns against the dangers of complacency and the need for leaders to be discerning, drawing parallels to biblical figures like Eli and Paul. He calls for a return to the seriousness of this role, urging elders to confront sin and maintain the purity of the church. Ultimately, he prays for the rise of faithful doorkeepers who will uphold the integrity of God's house.

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## Transcript

"It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. (Mark 12:34)."

We see here that the Lord has put His servants in charge of His house on earth (the church) and assigned a task to each servant. The Lord has also appointed a doorkeeper in the house who is specially commanded to stay on the alert. The doorkeeper is obviously one of the elders of the local church. His task is to open the door for the Lord to lead His flock, and to strictly ensure that hirelings and wolves do not enter the church and destroy the sheep or lead them astray (Jn.10:3).

He has also to keep an eye on the spiritual condition of all who are a part of the church, to warn those who are backsliding. The Bible commands all shepherds, "Know well the condition of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds" (Prov.27:23).

The doorkeeper must also be alert at all times, because worldly people may want to become a part of his local church who have been sent by Satan to corrupt the church and to destroy its witness.

Jude speaks of such people who had "crept in unnoticed" even into the churches in the first century (Jude 4).

The doorkeeper's job can at times therefore be the unpleasant task of putting such people out of the church.

Such a task is obviously not something that most elders would like to do - especially if they love their reputation for gentleness more than the honour of the Lord's Name and the testimony of the church!

So we see that the primary qualification for being a doorkeeper is a willingness to be strict for the glory of God's Name, and a freedom from seeking one's own honour and reputation.

Why did Paul say that after he left Ephesus, the church there would be overrun by "savage wolves who would not spare the flock" (Acts 20:29)? Because he knew that among the elders in that church, there was not even one who was willing to take up the unpleasant task of being a doorkeeper. All sought their own reputation for being "gentle brothers" and wanted to "get a following of disciples who would admire them".

That was why the church in Ephesus was later overrun by wolves, and Satan was able to corrupt it to such an extent that the Lord was about to remove His presence and His anointing (the lampstand) from their midst (Rev.2:5). This is also the very reason why many churches have been overrun by savage wolves today.

David said that he "would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psa.84:10).

That indicates that the doorkeeper's position was the least desirable of all positions in the house of God. That is the task for which the Lord desires brothers in responsibility to offer themselves today.

Eli was the high priest in Israel who was responsible for maintaining purity in God's tabernacle. But he permitted his own sons to defile the house of God by their adulteries, and he never drove them out. He just rebuked them mildly and they continued to live in sin (1 Sam.2:22-25).

In Eli's time, "word from the Lord was rare" (1 Sam.3:1). It is the same today too - even in many churches that proclaim the new covenant. This is because many elders, like Eli, love their children so much that they don't correct them. If an elder's children are not believers, he has no right to continue as an elder (See Tit.1:6). One who cannot be a doorkeeper in his own house, to bring up his own children properly cannot possibly be a doorkeeper in the church (See 1 Tim.3:4,5).

Such elders don't know how to listen to God, but only know how to defend their own family-members. They have lost the anointing of God, even though they may continue to sit on their thrones, like Eli!! We should pray that God will make it clear to every believer in the church that such elders have lost His anointing upon their lives.

When an elder's ministry is boring, heavy, lifeless and a dull repetition of what has often been said before, you can be certain that that elder has become like Eli. God is no longer with him, even if God was with him in the past. Perhaps he now loves money more than he loves the Lord and His church. Believers must not remain undiscerning, and imagine that such elders are men of God. They are not.

Many elders in new-covenant churches today are elders only because they have been in that church from the beginning. They sit on their thrones on the basis of their seniority and not on the basis of a continual anointing from God upon their lives.

Eli's children were "worthless men who did not know the Lord" (1 Sam.2:12). Yet they were given positions of responsibility in the Lord's house. This is the tragic situation today too. Men who "do not know the Lord" are in positions of responsibility in many churches. Thus Satan accomplishes his purposes in such churches, because there are no doorkeepers. The gates of Hell thereby prevail against such a church.

How strict Paul was when he heard that a man had sinned sexually in the church at Corinth? Even though he was not personally present in Corinth but had only heard about the matter through Sister Chloe (1 Cor.1:11), he said, "I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the Name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor.7:3-5).

It was Paul's strong stand that saved the church in Corinth from being polluted, and that prevented the Name of the Lord from being dishonoured there. His strong action also resulted finally in the man's salvation (2 Cor.2:5-8).

Only doorkeepers like Paul can preserve a church in purity and bring backsliders to an awareness of their true condition and back to the Lord. Those, on the other hand, who seek their own name and honour will never accomplish anything for the Lord.

It is possible for some elders who read this to be stirred up with human zeal now, and to determine that they are going to drive every sinner out of their churches in future. This will only result in their churches becoming empty of everyone - for "the zeal of man cannot accomplish the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). One has to be led by the Spirit even in this.

Jesus saw the moneychangers and the sellers of doves in the temple on many occasions. But He never drove them out every time He saw them. He drove them out only when His Father told Him to - once at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:15) and once at the end (Mark 11:15). Jesus was a faithful doorkeeper in His Father's house.

If we act in human zeal however, we will be like Uzzah who tried to steady the ark with his hands and was struck down by God "for his irreverence" (2 Sam.6:7).

As doorkeepers of the Lord's house, we have to be on the alert, not only against worldly believers who will corrupt the testimony of the church, but also against zealous young brothers who act in human zeal and lead other young people off in strange directions.

We have to be on the alert against emotionalism, and against new "fads" and "gimmicks" that immature disciples are always seeking for.

We have to be on the alert to ensure that the church does not begin to major in music or in social work or in anything other than "making disciples and teaching them to obey ALL that the Lord commanded" (Matt.28:19,20).

When Adam and Eve were turned out of the garden of Eden, God kept cherubs near the tree of life with a flaming sword that turned every way to prevent anyone from coming to the tree of life.

This is a picture of the type of ministry that doorkeepers must have in every church today. But such a doorkeeper must be one who has first allowed that sword to fall on his own flesh, slaying all known sin in his own life, all his human zeal, all his partiality towards his family members and friends, etc.,

Who then is willing to stand with the sword at the doors of the churches in India today?

May the Lord raise up many doorkeepers in our land.

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