

Preserving God's Standards

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of preserving God's standards and the dangers of deviating from the truth in the Christian journey.

Duration: 57:40

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Matthew 11:28, Mark 9:24, John 14:15, Galatians 5:7

Topics: "Spiritual Integrity", "Christian Accountability"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of staying true to God's standards and not deviating from the path set by Jesus. It warns against compromising with worldly influences and highlights the need for self-judgment, humility, and seeking the Holy Spirit's help to stay on track. The speaker urges individuals to focus on following Jesus, judging themselves, and being willing to take the blame, rather than blaming others. The message stresses the significance of preserving the testimony of Christ in the current generation and encourages a commitment to upholding high standards despite the prevailing backsliding in Christendom.

Transcript

Let's turn to Galatians and chapter 5, Galatians 5 and verse 7. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? Who deflected you from that right course? This detour is not from the one who called you to the race in the first place. I'm reading from a paraphrase and don't toss off or ignore this detour as something insignificant.

It's serious. You know when you're headed for a certain path, if you deviate one degree from that, your distance from the straight path doesn't look much in the beginning. But you go a hundred miles and you're miles away from where you wanted to go and your deflection was only one degree.

A lot of deviations from the standard of Christianity given us in the New Testament may look very slight in the beginning. And we can say, well, it's almost the same. It doesn't really matter.

But it's what's going to happen after some years when you're way off track. And so that's why it's very important to know the scriptures, to know the standards of God's word, to seek the help of the Holy Spirit in humility and self-judgment. Never to judge others but only ourselves and say, Lord, show me where I'm missing the path.

Never mind if everybody around you is missing the path. Please listen to me, brothers and sisters. Never mind if everybody in the church around you is missing the path.

You say, Lord, it's not my business to judge them. I want to see if I'm on the path. That's the only way you will preserve yourself till the day Jesus comes and have no regret in eternity.

If you allow yourself to be molded by the world around or to be deflected from your path by the reasonings and arguments of worldly-minded Christians or compromising Christians who say, well, that's not so serious and who will call total obedience to God's word as legalism. You know, we're all afraid of legalism because we have spoken so much against it. And I'm afraid of legalism totally.

But I want to distinguish between legalism and obedience to God's word. Jesus was not a legalist, but he said, every jot and tittle in the law I came to obey and fulfill. It's a spirit in which it was done.

It's a spirit. Legalism is a spirit. And some people, in avoiding legalism, end up in disobedience.

And as I've observed through this, I mean, read about how Christendom has developed through the centuries, it's good sometimes to read about how different churches grew and fell, backslid. Because we can learn from the failures of others. I can certainly learn for myself when I think of servants of God who started out well, fell away.

Churches that started out well and drifted. I think of that verse, this verse, you were running well. You started out well.

How is it you got deflected from that? Very subtly. And he goes on to say, in verse 9, it takes only a little amount of yeast to permeate a whole loaf of bread. Just a pinch of yeast and a whole loaf of bread gets affected by it.

And he says, a little deflection from the course may not look serious to you, but to put a pinch of yeast into wheat dough that you plan to make a chapati with, it's not going to end up as a chapati anymore. It's just a little bit, a pinch, becomes a puffed up loaf of bread. So he's using that example.

He says, don't think that a slight deviation is not serious. Because that's how the devil says, oh, that's a little thing. It doesn't matter.

Beware of that voice. Because years later, you don't know where that will lead you. That is how wonderful church movements that started out well have drifted and are in a backslidden condition today.

Today, you know, there's so many denominations. We say, look at that church. I wouldn't be a part of that church.

I'd say they don't even preach the new birth. But 400 years ago, they did preach the new birth. But today, that denomination doesn't.

400 years ago, they were pioneers to stand up for God. If Martin Luther were to come to earth today, I don't think he'd join the Lutheran church. If John Wesley were to come to earth today, I don't think he would join the Methodist church, which he started.

A lot of movements started out so well, but over a period of time, usually by the time the founders died, there was no one to hold them to the standards, and they drifted. So that's something we cannot avoid. It's

happened all through 2,000 years of church history.

And it has happened to every single group. The only thing was, almost all the groups said, it happened to others, but it will not happen to us. Give them 50 years, it happened to them too.

So the question is, will it happen to us? I say yes. I will not say like all those foolish people in the past centuries, it happened to others, but it will not happen to us. I say it can happen to anyone.

Because I don't see a single case, not a single case that I've read of, in the history of Christianity, where a movement continued with the same vision and fervor. No movement. Everything tends to decline.

I mean, even in the days of the... It's not because... I mean, they think of the days of the apostles, when the apostles were alive. Think what happened to churches like the church in Ephesus, which was the finest church on earth, I think, when Paul planted it and lived there for three years. But he told the elders, it's going to be different now.

He says, I know what's going to happen. You'll all seek your own. And years later, after Paul died, 30 years later, when John writes to the same church in Ephesus, he says, you left your first love.

Things are so bad. He says that the Lord says he's going to come and take away the anointing. You're going to be like, you're going to be a dead church.

And I think that happened in Ephesus a few years after Revelation chapter 2 was written. But in that church, the Lord spoke to the overcomers. He said, he who overcomes.

And that means in the church in Ephesus, there were some people who refused to go in the direction their leaders were leading them. They followed Scripture and Jesus, who Jesus was their example. So they overcame.

So what would have happened, I've thought, it's not written in the Bible, but I've tried to think, what would have happened to the church in Ephesus when God finally removed the lampstand and the anointing from them, and Jesus was no longer in their midst? I mean, it's amazing to see that Jesus was still in those churches for a long time. He was holding the leaders, but he warned them that he's going to give up on them pretty soon. And when he did give up on them, you know what would have happened in Ephesus? A place where there was only one church that had been two churches.

That's how denomination started. With a very good reason. Because the overcomers, maybe there were only five of them in a church of three, four hundred.

And those five would have said, hey, the Lord's not in this church anymore. And if the Lord's not here, why should we be here? And they would have left. And they'd have started another church with five people, despised and criticized by the big church in Ephesus, all these heretics have left and these rebels have left and all that.

And those folks didn't say anything, they kept quiet. They were despised, rejected, called heretics, called false teachers. But the Lord was with them.

And they had life and power and joy and love in their midst and they lived overcoming lives. But give them a fifty years and they also grew to the size of four hundred. And the same story was repeated.

And then the Lord had to look for overcomers in that church. So after a couple of hundred years, you see in Ephesus there'd be three churches now. And the third one is one with five or six people in it struggling.

And now the third one is called a heretic by two big churches. That's a cult, it's a heretic group. And these people would suffer under that shame of being called heretics and despised, but the Lord was with them and power and glory anointing.

And then the same story would be repeated after another fifty years. This has been the history of Christendom cycle after cycle after cycle. We can say it's the principle of death and resurrection.

That's the wonderful thing about the Gospel. There's a resurrection too. Okay, one church died but out of it there was a resurrection and maybe four or five people came out and there was another church which was pure.

So many people say, why so many denominations in Christianity? Do you know that if there was only one denomination in Christianity today, Christianity would be totally dead. There would be no living Christian on the earth. I say thank God for denominations.

And you see how they started years ago. They started because of some people having a desire to stand for the truth. But the question is preserving yourself in that running well.

And for that we need a healthy fear. I believe that. I want you to see 1 Corinthians in chapter 9. 1 Corinthians chapter 9. Here again he talks about a race.

And he says it's not a question of how you start the race. You know that's what he was telling the Galatians and now he's talking about the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 9 24.

We can say the starting of a church is like the starting of a race. The starting of a Christian life, your Christian life, when you started it, when you were born again. You came to the starting line of a race.

Think of a marathon race. 40 kilometers. The Christian life is more than 40 kilometers.

It's a huge marathon race that you run for many years. But you cannot join that race until you come to the starting line. I mean if a marathon race is running over here for example in Bangalore.

I can't just join in the middle and say hey I'm also in this. And maybe I'll come first. Because I jumped in ahead of everybody else on the 39th kilometer or something.

Or 39.9 at my age to come first. Jump in there. And say I came first.

No you're not first. You never came to the starting line. So you got to come to the starting line.

That is you must be born again. If you don't get there, no way of being part of the race. But he said after you come to the starting line, don't you know, listen to this, don't you know that so many may run in a race.

Thousands. But only one receives the prize. If there's only a first prize in a race, how many will get it? Only one.

So the point is, it's not a question of how you start. It's a question of how you finish. In all races, even in school races, is there any prize for those, even in the kindergarten race, is there a prize for somebody who started off well? In the Olympic Games, the highest of all competitions, is there any prize for those who

started well? There are numerous races where people started well, didn't even finish.

Certainly didn't come first. So what shall we say? We know that so many run in a race, but only one receives a prize. But in the Christian race, notice what he says.

Run in such a way that you may win. In other words, every one of you can get the first prize. But you got to finish well.

In the Christian race, he doesn't say only one will win the prize. All of you can run in such a way that you win. That's the encouragement.

If I were to say only one person is going to get the prize, that's probably going to be Paul or somebody. Forget it. I'm not even going to try.

No. I can also win a first prize. And you can also win a first prize.

But you'll never win it if you don't endure till the end. Running on the same track, not running on some other track which you find is more pleasant. And not taking any shortcuts.

Cheating that you don't complete the 40 kilometers. If you run on the track, then don't cheat. Don't take shortcuts.

Follow the rules. And don't jump into somebody else's track. That's what I mean.

Don't judge other people. Watch your track. And say, Lord, I want to win the prize.

I want to tell every one of you sitting here, you can win a first prize. Sure. You can.

That's up to you to decide whether you want it or not. So, if you want to win that prize, everyone who competes in the Games exercises self-control in all things. Have you ever seen a fat man coming to run the 100 meters race? I can take a bet on that man that he'll come last.

And nobody will bet with me because they'll agree with me. These guys discipline themselves to win the race. In the Christian life, it's not a question of the size of your waist.

It's a question of the attitude of your heart. That's what determines whether you're slim and fit. And he says that can only come through self-control.

There are certain things. Think of a man who's planning to run a marathon race. He gets up at 5 o'clock every morning for four years.

And says, I've got to run 40 kilometers today. And all that food that's going to make him fat, he says, I can't eat it. He likes it.

I mean, his mouth may be watering for it, but he says, I've got a race to run. And I've got to win that. I'm aiming for the Olympic gold.

And so I won't do this, and I won't do that, and I will do this. I don't feel like getting up in the morning, he says, at 5 o'clock and running 40 kilometers. Who feels like that? Nobody feels like that.

But I've got to do it, because I've got a goal. I've got to get that Olympic gold. He does it, does it, does it, does it, does it.

And one day you see him on the television, and he stands on the victory stand getting the Olympic gold, but you don't know what all went behind that. Years of discipline, of denying himself many things, of disciplining himself to do things that he did not like to do, because he had a goal. And Paul says, these people, they do it to get a gold medal, but we are going to get something that's going to last for all eternity.

I mean, what's the use of that gold medal? Okay, you got it for a moment. You get the glory and stand there, and it's over. And the next Olympics is somebody else who wins.

And they forget about you. They don't even know your name. But think of this.

God's not asking us to be steadfast and true to him just to give us a gold medal. It's something that's going to be eternal. Imperishable means for all eternity I'm going to have a glory, because I chose a certain way on earth.

I chose to deny certain things which other Christians perhaps said it's okay. Go ahead. And I chose to do certain difficult things, like studying the scriptures, which others just neglected.

Do you do that? When your friends want to watch a movie, you say, I want to study the scriptures. You won't regret it, I'll tell you that. You just won't regret it.

But you've got to be disciplined, because the pressure around us from worldly-minded Christians is to be undisciplined. The pressure around us from worldly-minded Christians is to pursue after money, as if that's the only thing that's important in the world. We need money, we certainly do.

Even Jesus needed money to live on this earth. But he didn't run after it. There's a lot of difference between earning money and running after it.

That's not the track we've got to run on. We've got to run on the track of being more and more like Christ. And so Paul says, I'm talking about myself.

He says, I've told you what you fellows should do, but I'm not here to judge you. I run, verse 26. He says, I don't know about you.

That's Message Bible. I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finishing line. And I'm giving it everything I've got.

No sloppy living for me. Oh no. I'm staying alert and in top condition spiritually.

And that is, he says, I discipline my body, verse 27, and make it my slave, because there is a danger that after I have preached to others, I can be disqualified at the finishing line. I've heard of people who came first, and they were disqualified when they reached the finishing line. They thought they came first.

But some rule they broke along the way, and they were disqualified. The prize went to the fellow who they thought came second. And Paul has recognized that.

He says, I can cheat along the way. I can do some things wrong. Nobody knows it.

We think nobody knows it. God knows it. And everybody thinks I'm running a wonderful race.

And when I reach the finishing line, and I stand before the Lord, the Lord says, disqualified. How terrible it will be in that day, when everybody in your church thought you were a wonderful wholehearted Christian, and the Lord says, disqualified, because you didn't follow the rules. I'll tell you something.

If you judge others, you don't follow the rules. If you judge yourself, you follow the rules. Please listen to this simple two-line advice I've given for 30 years.

Don't judge others. Judge yourself. I prophesy it will go well with you.

Don't be a busybody in other people's matters. Don't worry about how other people bring up their children. That's none of your business.

Bring up your own children right. And don't judge others. If their children go astray, pray for them.

Be merciful. Worry about yourself. Your family.

In other words, stick to your track. Don't worry about whether that fellow is following the rules in that track. There's an empire, a referee who will take care of all that.

You worry about your own track. Follow the rules, and don't cheat, and don't do anything wrong. Because the empire is watching you.

He's not going to ask you your opinion about other people who are running in the race. No empire asks one runner, how do you think he ran? Did he follow the rules? You say, I don't know whether he followed the rules. I was concentrating on getting to the finishing line.

Can we say that in the Christian life? Can you honestly say, all of you sitting here, I'm not here to find out if other people are running on the track, or following the rules. It's none of my business. I want to see whether I'm going to get to the finishing line.

And if you have a family, as long as that family is at home, you've got a responsibility to make sure your children get to the finishing line too. Once they leave home, all you can do is pray for them. But as long as they're in your home, you've got to stir them on to reach the finishing line.

And if your wife is not interested, pray for her. Don't judge her. You run.

Till one day she also feels, hey, challenged to follow you. Don't get behind her and push her. Just go ahead and lead.

Paul says, I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finishing line. A wonderful word for us to say, I don't know about you. I don't know about others, but I'm running hard for the finishing line.

I'm not going to be one of those good starters who started out well and didn't end up. You know, I've seen so many wonderful, fiery young people in my life. And I've seen them backsliders when they get married and have one or two children.

That nowadays I tell young people, well, I don't know whether you're wholehearted. I'll wait till you get married and have a couple of children. And then I'll tell you whether you're wholehearted or not.

I could be wrong today. I could be fooled. I've been fooled many times.

Well, let me see whether you have the same devotion to God and to the church and His kingdom and His work when you have two children and the struggles of bringing them up. And then I'll know whether you're wholehearted. Yeah, I know that was death for me.

Not just when I was single, but when we have children. Stick to the race. And I believe each of us has a responsibility, if you're a part of this church, to make sure that as long as possible we preserve this church in the direction God originally intended it to go.

The path of Christlikeness, discipleship. You know, years ago, the Lord showed me two sides of the Great Commission that He had given. And I want to show you that.

In Mark chapter 16, first of all, the Great Commission is a phrase used to express what Jesus told His disciples to do before He went up to heaven. It's called the Great Commission. Now, most Christians, please listen to me.

When I say most Christians, I mean 95% of believers. 95% of born-again believers think of the Great Commission only in terms of what you read in Mark 16, verse 15 onwards. Which is, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

He who has believed and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned. And when you go out with this type of evangelistic ministry, many signs will accompany you.

That is, you will cast out demons wherever you go. You will speak in new tongues. Serpents and poison will not harm you.

And you will lay hands on the sick. And they will be healed. Then Jesus went up to heaven.

That is a very important part of the Commission and I praise God for all the millions of Christians through the centuries, including the Apostle Thomas who came to India in 55 AD. I thank God that he took those words of Jesus seriously. And though India was a difficult country to go to, good old Thomas got into one of those Arab dhows that had trade with the Kerala coast and came down and preached the gospel.

One man. As far as we know, nobody came with him. Filled with the Holy Spirit.

And he planted the church in India. Christianity. Thank God for that.

That's why there's been Christianity in our country for 2,000 years. Don't you believe all these lies that people say that Christianity is a Western religion. We had Christianity in India long before America and England had it.

It's true. This is a very important part of the Great Commission. But like a coin, it's got two sides.

And the other side is Matthew 28. Which is also words that Jesus spoke probably on another occasion before he went up to heaven. Matthew 28, it says the last three verses is after his resurrection, before he ascended to heaven.

Jesus came and spoke to them. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Again he talks about going into all the world.

Going to all the nations, which is all the world. But this time, he doesn't say preach the gospel. This time he says, make disciples.

A disciple is a learner and a follower. A disciple is one who sits at the feet of his master and says, Master, teach me. And show me how I can live like you live.

That's a disciple. Who's doing it all the time. Teach me, Master, every day how I should live and help me to live that way.

Let me follow your example. Go and make disciples all over the world and then baptize them. That's, of course, mentioned in both places.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And here, the emphasis is not on speaking in tongues and healing the sick and not being harmed by serpents like we read in Mark 16. That is when you do evangelism, you see all that.

Here, when you make disciples, the emphasis is on teach them. After you make these disciples, there may be only ten in a particular town. Fine.

Teach those ten people what? Verse 20. Every single thing I commanded you. Teach them to do it.

Now, I want to ask you a little question in English. I think all you guys are pretty good in English. Can you tell me the difference if I read it like this? Please watch.

Teach them all I commanded you and teach them to do all I commanded you. What's the difference? Yes, obedience. But I think more than that, an example.

Not just teach them. Teach them to do. When I was in the military academy, I learned sailing.

Sailing a boat out in the seas with just two people. And then I had to teach other people how to sail. You could never do it on a blackboard.

I had to get into that boat and ask that other young fellow, come with me, I'll teach you how to sail this boat. No matter which direction the wind is, I'll take you from here to there. So, there's a difference between teaching them and teaching them to do.

One is just saying, this is what the Lord told us to do. And the other is, here's how to do it. And what are we to teach others? Every single thing that Jesus commanded.

And if you want to teach other people to do every single thing that Jesus commanded, you've got to experience it yourself first. So, coming back to what I said earlier about two sides of this great commission. Both are equally important.

I don't say one is more important than the other. In fact, one leads on to the other. It's like having children.

That's easy. But bringing up children in God-fearing ways. Boy.

That's not easy. To become a father? Easy. To be a good father? So, it's like that.

Mark 16 is be a father. Become a father. Produce spiritual children.

Bring them to Christ. Matthew 28 is, now be a good father. Bring them up to follow me.

That's tough. So, what is human tendency when you have an easy job and a tough job, which is the one you choose? So, if God gives us two jobs, one easy, one is tough, what will most people choose? The easy one. And that's why 95% of Christendom concentrates on evangelism.

Accept Christ. Sign the decision card. Raise your hand.

Okay. Baptize him. Come.

You're a member of the church. Let's go and find the next fellow. I don't despise it.

I believe it's very important. But, it's like having children. You can have 10 children, all wayward, godless.

It's better to have one child who's God-fearing. So, the Lord's interested in disciples. He's not interested in just more and more children coming into his family.

But, look what he says. Make them disciples. And not only make them disciples, teach them to do every single thing I commanded.

Let me just tell you some of the things Jesus commanded. Not to lust with your eyes after any woman. Do you think Christendom is filled with people who don't lust with their eyes after women? You really think so? Don't fool yourself.

Not to love money. Do you think churches are filled with people who don't love money? Quite the opposite, actually. Jesus said, don't get angry.

That's in Matthew 5. Do you think churches are filled with people who have overcome anger? Forgive everybody. Do you think churches are filled with people who have forgiven everybody? I'm just taking a few samples. Never be anxious.

Do you think churches are filled with believers who are never anxious? Rejoice always. Do you think churches are filled with people who rejoice all the time? Maybe two hours on Sunday morning. That's different.

What I'm saying is, why is it that all these commands of Jesus, you find hardly anybody who obeys even one of them? Leave alone all of them. When you hear of a school where a hundred students wrote the final examination, 99 of them failed. Do you blame the students or the teachers? If you know nothing about either.

I say, I blame the teachers. I mean, it's rare to find a good school where 99% of people fail. It must be the teachers.

It must be some cooperation school where the teachers don't come regularly or something like that. So it's like that. When you see 95% of Christians are not like this, I don't blame those Christians.

I blame their leaders. I blame the teachers who haven't taught them. I've been to so many churches.

I'll tell you, I hardly ever heard a message on not lusting with your eyes. Hardly ever in my 47 years of my Christian life. I hardly ever heard a message on never loving money.

I hardly ever heard a message on totally overcoming anger and never shouting at your wife or anybody else. Never once. I never heard a message on being totally free from anxiety and bitterness and gossiping and backbiting.

Hardly ever. I mean, I heard a message on, we've got to reach the lost, brother. I agree there.

But is that all the Bible says? When Jesus said, teach them to do every single thing I commanded you, we just concentrate on one subject. It's like a school which has only history. We only teach history in the school.

Kindergarten to 10th standard. You think they're all going to pass ICSE? History is very important. I agree.

But I would never send my child to a school that only teaches history. Hey man, there are lots of other subjects. We've got maths and physics and biology and chemistry.

No, no, no. We believe in history. Great.

You run your school. I'm not going to send my child to your school. That's the problem.

Hey, we've got to reach the lost. I believe that. I believe with all my heart.

I'm not against history and I'm not against evangelism. But I say a church, a school which is only teaching history needs a few teachers teaching other subjects. And so you stack a school with 95% of the teachers teaching history.

It's going to be a very imbalanced school and that's the problem with Christendom. And that's why Christendom has drifted. Because when you major on quantity, more and more and more people coming in, you sacrifice quality.

I'm all for quality. I wish all of India were converted. But I know they will not be converted.

You know why? Because Jesus said, because I believe the word of Jesus, the way to life is narrow. Matthew chapter 7 and verse 14. And very few find it.

Do you believe that? I believe it with all my heart. Very few find it. Millions may hear about it.

Millions may even understand it. But actually finding it, very few. And because I believe the word of Jesus, I say what may sound like a very unpopular thing, all of India is not going to be converted.

That may not be popular but it's realistic. How many people in India will find the way to life? Very few. So I'm not surprised it's going to be very few.

That doesn't mean I don't try to preach the gospel to everybody. I know when I got gripped with these wonderful truths of victory over sin and the new covenant and building the church 30 years ago, I said, Lord, if you give me life, I'm only one man, but if you give me life, I will do my best as much as one man can do to spread this message all over the world. If you give me ability, give me the opportunity, I will not compromise my convictions, I will not compromise my principles.

Do you have that passion? Has God given you, has God led you into a life which millions of other Christians don't experience? A life of joy, victory, triumph? Has God led you into a family life of blessedness and peace? Are you going to keep it to yourself? Or do you have a burden to share it with

others? Will you say, Lord, I'm only one man, but fill me with the Holy Spirit, give me strength, give me opportunities, I will not compromise my principles. And I want you to use me to spread this word to as many people as possible. Get people to stick to the track and not deviate even 1% from the center.

I believe God, I'm speaking to the young people here. There's an older generation here that's moving out. Don't waste your time judging them.

See yourself, you young people. In your generation, can God find you to lead His people along the way He wants? You say, well, I'm not a leader. You think all these people who are leaders today, when little Paul was born as a baby, you think his parents thought, this man's going to be the greatest apostle of all.

No, he didn't look like that. He looked like a baby who was wet and dirty most of the time, just like all babies are. But he grew up to be the greatest apostle.

Who knows? Some little boy or girl sitting here may be the one God wants to use in another generation. It may be you. Just say, Lord, I'm available.

Maybe one of you young people. But I'll tell you this, you can't play the fool and expect God to use you. You've got to say, Lord, you're first in my life.

You're going to be everything to me. I'm not going to run on another person's track. I'll never in my life judge another person.

I will only judge myself until the end of my life. And I'm not seeking popularity. I'm not going to be partial.

I'm not going to be any such thing. I'm just going to follow you steadfastly. I'm going to look at you, Jesus, and follow you.

I grew up in a church when I was a young Christian, where I'm not saying anything bad about them, but to tell you honestly, I could not find one example to follow whom I could say was a man of God, whom I could spontaneously respect. I submitted to the elders because they were elders. You know, it's like a wife may submit to her husband because the Bible says submit to your husband, not because she respects her husband.

You're a very fortunate wife, if you can also respect your husband as a godly man, whom you joyfully submit to. But a lot of wives can't do that because the husbands are not godly people. But they still, because the wives are God-fearing, they submit because the Bible says that.

So that's how I submitted to the elders in my church, because the Bible said submit to the elders. But I could not spontaneously respect them as men of God. But the Lord said to me, look at me and run the race.

Don't worry about people around you. And I'm so thankful that 45 years ago the Lord spoke that word to me. Look at me and don't look at other people.

And that's helped me more than any other verse in scripture in running this race. Let us run this race looking unto Jesus. And one translation says, looking away from everyone else unto Jesus.

Looking away from everything else unto Jesus who is the starter and finisher of our faith. So I believe the days are such when there's so much of compromise among good believers in Christendom, standards

going down in the matters of money, matters of moral purity, all over Christendom the standards have gone down. If you want to be a man or a woman of God, you'll have to keep your eyes on Jesus.

You may have to turn your eyes away from certain people in the church. In your church. And say, Lord, I'm going to keep my eyes on Jesus.

I'm not going to look at anyone else. I'm not here to judge them. God bless them.

But I'm going to look at you. I'm going to follow you. And I can prophesy it will go exceptionally well with you.

Yeah, God wants such people. You know, in the Old Testament you'll see how in Exodus and chapter 32 Moses had gone up to the mountain and he was there for 40 days and God was writing down the Ten Commandments you read in chapter 31. All the previous chapters from chapter 25 to 31 or even before that.

God was giving the commandments to Moses. Forty days is what? One and a half months? Less than one and a half months. He was away.

And it says the people saw chapter 32 verse 1 that Moses was taking a long time to come down from the mountain. They got fed up. They told Aaron.

Aaron is the second leader. He said, Come, let's make us a god who will go before us. As for this Moses, we don't know what's happened to him.

And Aaron said, Take your gold rings and the ears of your wives and bring them here to me. And he tore off the gold rings and Aaron took all this gold and Aaron listen to this, verse 4 with a graving tool made it into a molten and said, This is your God who split the Red Sea. This is your God who destroyed the Egyptians under the Red Sea.

This is the God who sent the plagues into Egypt. This golden calf you see. And those stupid people, 600,000 of them believed it.

And they worshiped it. And they said, We will call this God Jehovah. Verse 5 Tomorrow will be a feast to, not to the golden calf, but to Jehovah.

So the name of the, they named the golden calf Jehovah. This is Jehovah. You know how the Bible speaks of another Jesus.

The name is the same, but it's not the Jesus of the Bible. This is like that, another Jehovah. And so the next day they rose and had peace offerings and they rose up to dance and play and eat and drink.

And the Lord spoke to Moses and said, Go down. Your people have corrupted themselves. One man of God was away from the camp for 40 days.

And the whole camp went astray. That's the message of the Bible. They've turned aside.

They've compromised. The Lord said, I'm going to destroy them. Moses, verse 10 I'll make you into a great nation.

I've finished with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It's going to be Moses. What do you think Moses did? He said, Yeah Lord, I think it's about time.

He never said that. He said, No Lord. Not me.

I don't want to. It must be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not me.

It's always the mark of a man of God. He doesn't want anything for himself or his family name or any such thing. He says, Lord, if you do this what will the Egyptians say? What will happen to your name? People say this God of theirs brought them out into the wilderness and destroyed them.

Your name will be dishonored, Lord. I'm not worried about my name but your name. It's always the mark of a man of God.

He's more concerned about Jesus' name than his name. He's more concerned about God's family than his family. Be a man of God.

God wants such people on earth. And Moses turned around and went down and he was angry. He saw the people dancing and he went down and he took the calf.

Verse 20. This reminds me of Jesus whipping people out of the temple. Took the calf and burnt it and scattered it.

And look what he did. He said, you Israelites, drink this water now. And he made them drink it.

And now listen to this. You see what a coward Aaron was and a liar. Cowards are liars and liars are cowards.

Moses said to Aaron, why did you do this? Aaron said, please don't get angry with me. You know these people, they are the ones who had this idea. They said make a God for us and this is the best part of it.

Verse 24. They gave me the gold. I threw it into the fire and out of the fire came a calf.

What a miracle that is. I just threw all this gold into the fire and out of the fire came a calf. This guy took a graving tool and fashioned it as it says earlier in the chapter.

You know, when you don't have the courage to acknowledge your fault, you'll be like Aaron. When you don't have the humility to say I was wrong. It was my mistake.

I compromised. You end up like Aaron. Useless to God.

Useless to man. How different was David who did something worse than that. Committed adultery and killed the woman's husband and married her.

But the wonderful thing about him was, he says, Lord it's my fault. When a prophet came to him and said, you're the man. He said, yes, I'm the man.

In a million believers you may find one like that. Every Tom, Dick and Harry will justify themselves. No, no, no, this, that, the other.

That's what made David who was a much greater criminal than any of us sitting here. A man after God's own heart. Because he was willing to take the blame immediately.

I want to give you a little bit of advice. To judge yourself means you never, never, never hesitate to take the blame. Lord, it's my fault.

Don't blame your brother. Don't blame your wife. Don't blame your husband.

Don't blame your parents. Don't blame your children. Say, Lord, it's me.

You'll be a man after God's own heart. You'll be a woman after God's own heart. Otherwise, you'll be like Aaron.

Yeah, what I want to say is that how quickly people can drift. Forty days was enough. There's a verse in the book of Judges where it says in the book of Judges we read about how it happened with the Israelites after Joshua died.

In verse 10 of chapter 2 all the generation that is Joshua's generation died and there arose another generation that did not know the work of the Lord. Because it says here in verse 7 the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who had seen the wonderful work of the Lord and then Joshua died and then arose another generation that went astray. Joshua preserved them.

He was dead. Gone. You read the book of Judges it says everybody did what was right in their own eyes and there was nobody to control them.

It's the same story throughout Scripture. You read in the time of Elijah there were 7,000 people it says the Lord himself told Elijah in 1 Kings 19 there are 7,000 people in Israel Elijah who have not bowed the knee to Baal. 1 Kings 19 verse 18 don't think everybody is idolaters there are 7,000 people in Israel still who are not idolaters but none of those 7,000 people could turn Israel back to God for that God could use only one man Elijah.

You know why? Because he lived before God's face. He was not afraid of a king, he was not afraid of anybody. He lived before God's face.

It's the same in the New Testament. Paul says in Acts chapter 10 Acts 20 rather, when he calls the elders in Ephesus together he says I've been with you for three years and now I'm going away. He says I preached to you 2,000 sermons day and night for three years.

He says all that there in Acts 20 verse 17 to 38 and he says I know what's going to happen verse 29 after I leave I know what's going to happen as soon as I'm gone vicious wolves are going to show up and rip this flock. In other words he says the world is going to come right in those wolves would not dare to step in as long as Paul was there but they're just waiting for Paul to go and they will twist the words of scripture and seduce disciples into following them instead of following Jesus.

So he said I plead with you stay awake keep up your guard remember for three years I kept on telling you pouring out my heart with you one after another what can I do now I can't stay with you forever I'm turning you over to God I pray that he'll preserve you and you know my friends I was not verse 35 I was not interested in your money I worked with my own hands supported myself verse 33, 34 and I showed you by an example and he prayed with them but you know what happened in the church in Ephesus that church

exactly what Paul said happened they didn't care for him they said we're okay and they drifted this has been the history of Christianity I say this so that you will take to heart Lord you are another generation from me most of you the generation I grew up in is growing old and moving on many of you sitting here I'm speaking to the young people here you young men and young women there is a charge God is putting upon your shoulders I don't know how many of you are willing to take it and say Lord in my generation I want to be a flaming fire for you to preserve the standards of your word to lift up Jesus draw people to him and don't say I'm oh God can't use me God picks up people whose lives have been messed up with sin if they really repent I mean he could turn Mary Magdalene into a saint he could turn the chief of sinners Saul of Tarsus into the mightiest apostle of all so don't think your past failures can hinder you and don't think of your limitations because it's got to be the power of the Holy Spirit seek for the power of the Holy Spirit and he can make you and your generation a flaming witness for God I believe God needs such people to preserve his testimony I'm not talking about preserving CFC I have no interest in preserving CFC zero interest I have an interest in preserving the testimony of Jesus Christ in India whatever name it's called I don't care but preserving the name the testimony of Christ in India and you my brother sister you and the younger generation have a responsibility for that I hope you'll take it I hope you'll take a challenge from the Lord today and say Lord I want to take my Christian life seriously never mind if other people around you don't forget about whether they are running according to the rules forget about their track you took care of your track say Lord I'm going to be ready to take the blame I'm ready to judge myself I'm ready to follow your word I'm going to hold up the highest standards even if everybody around me is a backslider I'm going to follow you Let's bow our heads for a moment

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11735.mp3>

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/z6hTw_iRan8.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/preserving-gods-standards/>

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