

Preserving Our Devotion To Jesus

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant, highlighting the shift from following commandments to developing a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It challenges believers to move beyond a legalistic approach to faith and instead focus on a deep, passionate love for Jesus, seeking His presence above all else. The speaker urges the congregation to prioritize spiritual profitability and edification, not just legality, and warns against losing the fervent love for Christ that marks true Christianity.

Scripture: Malachi 1:6, Psalms 73:25, 1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 10:23

Topics: "New Covenant", "Relationship with Christ"

Description

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Transcript

We have spoken a lot in this church about the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. And we rejoice in the fact that we seek to be a new covenant church and new covenant people. One of the big differences is in the old covenant there was no personal relationship with God.

There were commandments. You hear it and obey it. And people in the old covenant also had a conscience.

But what convicted them was if they disobeyed a commandment. Oh, God said I shouldn't commit adultery or I shouldn't bear false witness or oh I'm sorry I made that idol. Different commandments and there were many other.

As you know there were 613 commandments. Many many commandments and they were very careful. If they did something wrong their conscience disturbed them.

But when Jesus came and the Holy Spirit came it changed. And I don't know whether it has changed for most of us here. It's possible that for many of you you're still living in oh I violated that commandment oh I'm sorry I lusted after that woman oh that was a bad attitude I had towards that person and my

conscience is disturbed.

Lord I'm sorry please forgive me. I'm not saying that's bad but there's a taste of old covenant in that because it's sin. This particular commandment I shouldn't have a bad attitude towards that person.

It's wrong. Maybe I have like those 613 commandments I've got a list of my own commandments which I've heard in the church. Oh I feel that was a bit unrighteous and money matters there.

I'm sorry Lord. Think of the sins that you have confessed because your conscience convicted you say in the last one month. Isn't it things like I just told you? It could be many things like that.

It's individual items whereas God's purpose in the new covenant is that we come into a relationship with Jesus so that our conscience should convict us. Lord I lost my love for you right now. I don't seem to love you right now as I should.

That sense of your presence there with me is gone even if I'm not committing any particular sin. I'm not lusting after any woman. I don't have a wrong attitude towards anybody.

I'm not doing anything unrighteous but Lord that sense of your presence with me is gone. Does that convict you? Then you know you're moving out of the old covenant into the new covenant. So I'm not saying that to condemn any of you.

My brothers and sisters in this church there is no condemnation. We never speak to condemn people. We speak to lead people to conviction, to lead them to something higher.

Condemnation always brings you down. Conviction will bring you higher. So take it like that and I'll give you an example of it.

See let me begin first of all with 1 Corinthians in chapter 10. In 1 Corinthians 10 verse 23 it says all things are lawful but all things are not profitable. So that is the difference between a carnal Christian and a spiritual Christian.

One difference. The carnal Christian lives at the level where I'll never do anything wrong. That's wrong.

I won't do it. That's right. You can rise above that and say well I'll only do what is lawful.

You can still be a carnal Christian. But the spiritual Christian says well out of 100 things that are lawful for me to do only 10 are profitable. So I'm going to leave out the other 90 things even though the other 90 things are perfectly right.

My conscience will not convict me if I do any of those 90 things but I still don't do them because they are not profitable. That is the truly spiritual Christian. One part of being truly spiritual is you choose what is profitable in everything.

It's not just that I did something. I avoid something wrong with money matters but take the matter of money. To do something wrong with money to cheat or to tell a lie and to take advantage of someone financially, that's wrong.

I won't do that. But even if I'm doing what's right, the way to spend my money is Lord is this the way you want me to spend my money? Is this thing really going to be? There's nothing wrong in my spending my

money on this but is it really profitable or is it just something that I'm going to get nothing out of it really? There are very few people who live at that level but those are the ones who really progress and who make, whose life counts for God in this earth. And the other thing he says here, all these things are lawful but they don't edify, they don't build me up.

So the spiritual person is always thinking of, is this going to build me up? Not is it lawful? For example, many of us go to the internet. There's nothing wrong in that. There's a lot of good things we can get out of it.

There are a lot of bad things. And I can say, I avoid all the bad things. I never go to pornography on the internet.

I never go to a lot of things that are evil and bad. Okay. But there are other things on the internet which are not profitable.

They're not evil. They're not pornography. They're not dirty.

But they're not profitable. They're not edifying. I'm not saying you should never look up the news or see what's happening in the world.

I think we should know what's happening in the world. Jesus knew when the tower of Siloam fell. He also knew how many people were killed there.

Jesus knew about what's happening around him and we should know too. But we shouldn't get so taken up with these things that we don't have time for what is edifying and profitable. And one way you could ask yourself is, do you meditate more on the news or on the Bible? Do you watch television more than you meditate on scripture? It may be clean programs.

All things are lawful. But a new covenant Christian lives at, is it profitable? Is it building up? Is it going to build me up? Now some of you may never take seriously what I say but you will see the result in your life five years from now. And there are others who take seriously what I say and they will see a result five years from now and there'll be a world of difference between these two believers.

Even though they're sitting here listening to, they haven't committed gross sin. They have good testimony. There's a tremendous difference.

Take another passage 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 12. 1 Corinthians 6:12. It says all things are lawful for me but not all things are profitable.

Again similar words. But he says another thing here. All things are lawful for me but I will not be mastered by something.

Food for example has a tremendous power to master us. Or the internet has a power to master us. Different things you know.

It could be sport. I can be so crazy after cricket or something like that. It masters me.

There's nothing wrong in watching a cricket match on TV. No. The question is has it mastered you? Has your craze for some type of food mastered you so much that you complain if the food is not good enough at home or you can't live without that.

There's a spiritual person. That's how Jesus lived you know. So ultimately I want to turn to Song of Solomon and show you how this all works.

It's not by these laws. Okay I got a new law now that I'm going to live by what's profitable and I'm going to live by what is edifying and I will not allow anything to master me. That can also be a commandment.

And you can make a list of is that the things that master me. Okay I'll eliminate that. And again it can be a bit of the old covenant way.

That I avoid certain things and I do these other things and I discipline myself. All of which is excellent. But true spirituality I want to tell you.

Remember what we heard about the Lord's complaint against the church in Ephesus was not or the leader of the church in Ephesus was not you're not choosing what is profitable. He says you lost your love for me. The only crime that that elder committed was he lost that fervent love for Jesus Christ that he had once upon a time.

That was a time maybe a few months or for a few months or a year or so after he got converted where he really was fervently in love with the Lord. He didn't know many commandments. He didn't know many rules.

He didn't know so many things. But his love for Jesus kept him from so many wrong things. His love for Jesus kept him doing what is profitable.

Not because he made a list of what is profitable. His love for Jesus kept him doing what's profitable. His love for Jesus kept him from being mastered by food or mastered by anything.

Because his love for Jesus drew him away from all these other things. It's like you know when a girl is madly in love with some boy. She doesn't have time for other things because she's always wanting to be with him.

She's kept away from so many things because of her love for him. That is true spirituality. So in Song of Solomon you read of a time when you know this is a picture of Christ and his bride.

So you got to read it. You can if you're a centrally minded person you read it in a central way. But if you try to understand this in a spiritual way there's a lot of spiritual profit in it.

And you'll read it thinking of you and Jesus your bridegroom. I tell you it's a wonderful book if you can concentrate on that and say this is me and Jesus my bridegroom. And you read in 1 Corinthians 3 verse 1. On my bed at night after night I sought him whom my soul loves.

He wasn't trying to discern what is profitable, what is not profitable, what is edifying, what's not edifying because some new commandment he heard on Sunday that that is a new level we must live with. No it automatically would come if I start here. I sought for him not a doctrine or a teaching or what should I avoid and what should I do but I sought for him and I wish I could draw all of you my brothers and sisters to him.

True Christianity is a personal devotion to Jesus Christ. From that flows everything. That is what changed my life.

I'm very thankful that when I got converted I didn't get converted to certain rules and avoid this and avoid that. Somehow the Lord brought me to be devoted to him. In fact the first book I studied in the Bible after I got converted was Song of Solomon.

Intensely. It's the most marked book in my first Bible. I thank God for that.

I was a young Christian just born again and somehow the Lord led me to that which is fundamental, which is devotion to Jesus Christ. And that is the most precious thing to me even today, even now. I sometimes wake up at night and long for him just like it says here.

I seek for him whom my soul loves and I want to find him and the bride says I couldn't find him so I must get up and go about the city, verse 2, in the streets, in the squares. I must seek him whom my soul loves because I've lost the sense of his presence. I want to ask you my brothers and sisters especially those of you who don't commit any gross sin, you got a good testimony, your conscience is clear most of the time, you don't do anything evil, you don't have any bitterness against anybody and avoiding all evil, do you have a passionate longing for Jesus Christ? To be in his presence all the time and that when you say Lord where are you? I seem to have lost you.

That I must find him and he says I sought him, verse 2, but I didn't find him and then it speaks of the watchman. These are other believers who don't have that same passion and he asks have you seen him my soul loves? They couldn't help and then I found him, verse 4, and when I found him I held on to him and I would not let him go. Yeah, that's a Lord I want you more than anything else.

It starts like that sometimes in our Christian life but then a little later things change. We get a little reputation in the church and once you get a little reputation in CFC the great danger is you begin to slacken off. Mark my words and ask yourself if that is not true.

That when you had no reputation in CFC you were just a nobody, you really wanted Jesus but now you have a sort of reputation in CFC and you're not so passionate about having the presence of Jesus now because you're somebody. You may not be an elder but you're somebody. May God have mercy on you.

You have lost something brother, sister. I never want a reputation in CFC. It has no interest for me.

I don't even want people to think oh I've got a good testimony. The passion of my life is like the psalmist said, there's nothing on earth I desire beside you. Nothing, not even a good testimony.

You Lord, if I have you I have everything. Not even a good conscience, beyond a good conscience. To me my good conscience is that I'm in the presence of the Lord all the time.

What happens sometimes with many believers is chapter 5. See in chapter 3 the bride is seeking after the bridegroom and found him and so happy. What a wonderful relationship it is in those early days. Do you remember those early days in your Christian life where nobody knew you, where you were just an insignificant believer but you loved Jesus and you had wonderful times with the Bible.

Early morning you would read and Jesus would speak to you and you would speak to him. But it's not like that now. What happened? It says in chapter 5 verse 2, I was asleep but my heart was waking and now my beloved is knocking.

She's not going after the bridegroom now. The bridegroom, she's left the bridegroom. She's taken up.

She's still got a good conscience but she's left him and he comes knocking at the door and says open to me my sister, my darling. Open to me and what does she say from inside? A lazy response. I've taken off my dress, verse 3. How can I put it on again? I washed my feet.

How can I dirty it again coming out with you? And then my beloved is still longing after me. The Lord is longing for fellowship with us. He extended his hand through his opening and finally my feelings were aroused and after a little bit of delay, I got up and I opened.

But by the time I opened, verse 6, my beloved had gone. That's happened to me in the past. I never want it to happen again where I'm doing something.

Maybe I'm even writing an article, Christian article and the Lord says stop that. I want to have a little time with you. Maybe two minutes, five minutes.

I say Lord just wait. Just 15 minutes. I'll finish this article then I'll talk to you.

So I finished the article and then I seek the Lord and I can't find him. Exactly like here. He's gone.

Have you had that experience? If you haven't had it, it's probably because you never have the Lord's presence. Even when he's absent, it's just the same as when he's all the time. It's like that.

But those who have really known the Lord's presence and fervent love for Jesus know that something has happened. He doesn't seem to be here. It's not that you're committing gross sin or anything, but the presence of the Lord is not there.

That first love has gone. I don't know how many of you believe that losing your first love for Jesus Christ is serious. Do you remember a time in your life when you loved Jesus all your heart and it didn't matter to you what anybody in the world said? It didn't matter to you what you lost or what you gained? You just loved Jesus so much that the opinion of men meant nothing.

Dear brothers and sisters, that is true Christianity. If you have lost it, you have lost true Christianity. Whatever else you got is like a shell with all the right words.

And that's why your Christian life becomes dry and boring. It's a form. You go through the form and you do the right thing, say the right things, you sing the songs, you come along for the meetings and conference and everything.

But it's a ritual. See that's what happened in Malachi. We started in Malachi.

Let's turn there in Malachi chapter 1 verse 6. Now this is Old Testament, so the bride bridegroom relationship was not there among God's people. It was like a servant, master and son and father. The Lord says in Malachi 1 6, a son honors his father and a servant his master.

If I'm a father, where is my honor? And if I'm a master, where is my respect? You have despised me. And he says, how have you despised you? How do we despise the Lord? How do I despise this bridegroom of mine who loves me so much? How does a wife despise her husband? It's not by scorning him or spitting on him. We'd never do that to Jesus.

I'll tell you how we can despise the Lord and be like that bride who didn't get up in time to meet the bridegroom. Here it is that in our offering something to God, we don't give the best. You know there was a

law in the Old Testament that when you offer a sheep to God as a sacrifice, you must examine the sheep carefully to see that there's no defect at all.

In fact, that was one of the jobs of the priests. Somebody brought a sheep and the priest would say, let me examine this whole sheep, the eyes, the legs and every part of it. There must be absolutely no defect.

But what happened in the beginning, they started like that, the Israelites. But by the time they came to Malachi time, it was the end of the Jewish period, 1,000 years since Moses' time. They would pick up some sheep and say, okay, well, let's give it.

Especially, they say, oh, we've got to give a sheep to God. Let's pick up this one and give it. It's like the way some people come to a meeting.

Oh, it's time for the meeting. Sunday morning, let's go. Not really excited about the possibility of meeting with the Lord Jesus in the midst of God's people.

It's just a routine. Sunday morning, time for the meeting. Let's go.

Let's listen to a message. Let's hope we get a good message. Let's hope we get a good message.

More than, Lord, I want to meet with you. I want to meet with your people. We had two or three gathered in my name.

There I am in the midst of them. I remember when I was seeking the Lord about ministry and I said, Lord, I think of that word that when people prophesy, others will listen and say, oh, God is here. 1 Corinthians 14.

I said, Lord, that's what I want whenever I speak. That people must come and contact you and say, the Lord Jesus is here. He's speaking to us.

Not just that we heard a good message. I want you, my brothers and sisters, you may not be a preacher, but I believe when we come together, we can transmit some of the presence of the Lord. The Bible speaks in 2 Corinthians 2 of the aroma of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2, 14, the aroma of Christ. Aroma is a word connected with perfume. You know how if women, particularly, if they have a strong perfume, you can sort of get that perfume, even an aroma, a little distance.

You say, hey, here's a person with perfume. To have something of Jesus like that with us, that when people come to meet with us, they see something of Jesus. It's not always Jesus' kindness.

It may be his strictness. Jesus is kind and strict. So, I don't want to have a one-sided idea, but this must be our great longing.

This is what it means to be a witness. You shall be witnesses unto me. The Holy Spirit has come upon you.

You shall be witnesses, not to a doctrine, not to a new covenant teaching. You shall be witnesses unto me, to the uttermost parts of the earth. People who come in touch with you, they're going to see Jesus.

They're going to somehow get something from the Lord. That won't happen if we, in our private life and our attitude to give to God is, oh well, I have to do something. I have to go to the meeting.

I have to do this. Always, what is the minimum I have to do to keep a good testimony in the church? That's what these people were. They gave something, but it was not out of fervent devotion.

Can you think back to the days when you first repented and you really got converted and the first time you came to CFC and were gripped? Can you remember the fervor with which you used to come to the meetings those days? Has it all lost and become a dull ritual? I pray that will never happen to me. I've been a believer nearly 60 years and I say, never let that happen to me, that going to a meeting is a dull ritual. Never.

I want it to be something I'm passionate about. You've often heard me say that the mark of a true worshiper, you know, Jesus said we must worship first before we serve him. The mark of a true worshiper is that he can always say these words in Psalm 73.

And if you're not familiar with this, my brother, sister, please turn to it. You're familiar with it. Remember it all your life.

Psalm 73 and verse 25. To me, I never read this anywhere, but the Lord taught me. Psalm 73 verse 25 is the clearest mark of a man who's a true worshiper.

It's not that he avoids the unprofitable and does what's profitable. That's good. That is the outward action that comes from this inner life.

What I read in 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Corinthians 10 is, I will only do what's profitable. I will only do what's edifying. I will not be mastered by anything.

Very good things for a spiritual Christian, but that flows from this inner life. Psalm 73 verse 25. Lord, when I get to heaven, I'm not interested in anything but you.

I'm not looking for mansion, reward, crown, or freedom from all the headaches of earthly life. No, there are a lot of Christians waiting for that. You know, people are sick and tired of this earth and say, oh Lord, come let me take away my life.

I never say that. I say, Lord, when I get to heaven, I want to see you. Like we sing in that song, I shall see him.

I shall see him and I shall know him. I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hand. I look around and all the people in heaven and I see one person with nails in his hand.

That's what I'm going for. I'm no one but you and for all eternity. What rapture will it be, Lord? Prostrate before your throne to lie and just gaze and gaze on you.

That's real to me. And on earth, the second part of that verse, I desire nothing but you. I'm not desiring a promotion in my job.

I'll tell you, you may say, I said that. I honestly said that to the Lord when I was in the Navy. Even though once that was my ambition to go to the top.

But when I found Jesus, I said, Lord, I'm not interested in a promotion anymore. If I get enough to earn my living, that's fine. But I want you.

There's nothing I desire on earth but you. Even marriage. I said, Lord, I don't desire it if it's not your will.

I desire you. Absolutely nothing. I evaluated myself.

Money, marriage, promotion, nothing. I desire you. If I have you, Lord, I will ask for nothing else.

I'll tell you something. When you come to that type of life where you desire only Jesus, he will give you the things that don't spoil you. He'll give you as much money as will not spoil you.

He'll keep you from so many things. I don't have to battle sin so much if I'm taken up with Jesus and say, Lord, I desire nothing but you. I want you.

Like that Psalm of Solomon chapter 3, I long for him at night. Where? And I went and searched for him because I wanted him. I missed his presence.

I want him. That is the mark of a person who has not left his first love. And that was the complaint that the Lord had against the elder in Ephesus.

You have left your first love. I don't know about you, my brothers and sisters, but when I mingle with a lot of you, I feel that many of you have left your first love. I wonder if some of you ever had a first love.

Have you ever really been so passionately in love with Jesus that he means more to you than anything else on this earth? That is true Christianity. And if you haven't experienced it, I want to invite you earnestly to seek God to fill you with the Holy Spirit so that Jesus becomes everything to you. Let's pray.

Our heavenly Father, bring us to that devotion to you through the Holy Spirit, to the Lord Jesus, that we can really from the depth of our heart be able to say, I desire nothing but you, Lord Jesus. And I desire no one, not even my wife or husband more than you. You are more precious to me than anyone on this earth.

And you'll always be like that. You're more precious to me than comfort and money and all the things that the world seeks after. If I have you, Lord, that's enough.

I'm not asking for anything else. I desire nothing on earth but you. And when I get to heaven, I'll not be interested in anything but you.

Heavenly Father, bring us to that life where our Christianity is Jesus Christ and devotion to Christ. We know that the devil is always seeking to lead people astray from that simple devotion to Christ. We pray that you will preserve us there.

And those of us who have not come there, that you will bring us there. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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