

Religiosity and Spirituality

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a spiritual person, who seeks God's approval and obeys His word, rather than a religious person, who is concerned with outward appearances and seeks man's approval.

Duration: 47:15

Scripture: Matthew 7:21

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the difference between religiosity and spirituality, highlighting the importance of having a deep, intimate relationship with God rather than just following religious practices. It discusses the need to obey God's Word, seek God's approval over man's approval, and surrender our will to God daily in the power of the Holy Spirit. The message stresses the significance of doing God's will and repenting from a life of self-centeredness to truly walk in spiritual maturity.

Transcript

God is a good God and the church is a place where we never hear, if the word of God is spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit, we never hear a discouraging word. It's like that old folk song, where never is heard a discouraging word. The skies are not cloudy all day.

That's how the church is. And so everything that you hear today, I hope it will encourage you. The Bible begins with two stories.

My subject, by the way, is religiosity or spirituality. There's a lot of difference between being religious and being spiritual, a world of difference. Religiosity is the work of the devil.

Spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit. And two classic examples of that, the Pharisees were religious. They read the Bible, they prayed, they never missed a service.

They worshipped, they clapped, they sang, but they went to hell. Jesus said, how will you escape the damnation of hell? They fasted, they prayed, they gave their tithes, but they missed out on God. Jesus was spiritual.

He also studied the Bible, prayed, fasted, gave, served. Outwardly, they looked the same. They both fasted, they prayed, they read the Bible.

Jesus never missed a service, the Pharisees never missed a service, but there's a world of difference, finally, in eternity between the two. These things are written for our instruction, so that we learn to discern between the two. And it's when we hear God's Word in the power of the Spirit, it's like a scan.

You know how when the doctors suspect something inside our body, which is not visible on the outside, they tell you to take a scan, and the scan shows up what's inside. So God's Word, when it's preached in the power of the Spirit, will be like a scan, and if you get a scan, the wonderful thing about God is that He doesn't humiliate us before others. He doesn't show the scan report to anyone, but to you.

So as you hear it, you will know what the Holy Spirit is saying to you, and it's a word of encouragement, because He doesn't give you a discouraging report saying there's no cure for it. There is a cure for it, no matter how much you're messed up. And that's the, the first two stories in the Bible are about that.

I want to tell you a little bit about it. Genesis 1, verse 1, in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. You all know that verse.

But the next verse says, the earth was, or the earth became, which is a legitimate translation of that, became without form, empty, dark. How did that happen? Something happened between verse 1 and 2. One of the angels, the head of the angels, whom God had created, and given such wisdom and beauty and power and ability, began to think too much of himself. Remember, this is how sin came into the world, into the universe.

Began to think too much of himself, and got a following, and wanted to even rebel against God. God cast him out, and he became the devil, and his followers became the demons. And whenever something, sin comes into a universe God's created, the result is confusion and chaos, and the earth became shapeless, empty, and void.

But from that moment onwards, we read in Genesis 1, to the Spirit of God began to move immediately, and restored it to a beautiful earth by the end of chapter 1. And God himself could look at that, and say it's very good. So that's the first message in the Bible. When the devil comes and messes up something, the Holy Spirit's immediately there to bring restoration and beauty.

Such beauty that Almighty God himself can certify. Very good. The second story in the Bible is about God creating a beautiful couple, husband and wife.

Perfect in every way, happily married, and immediately the devil comes in again. This is the second story in the Bible, Genesis 2 and chapter 2, chapter 2 and chapter 3. And again he messes up, and the earth becomes full of thorns, and wild animals, and man begins, the man begins to accuse his wife, and all types of problems, and the first son becomes a murderer. But as soon as that happens, as soon as they fell, God comes in and says, where are you Adam? It wasn't Adam who went searching for God.

When Adam and Eve messed up their life, they should have been the ones seeking after God, but it is God who went seeking after them. That's the message in scripture. And the words that God said to them was, as it were, to paraphrase was, don't worry, the seed of the woman will one day come and crush the head of the serpent.

I've made a solution for this problem already. There's nothing that takes God by surprise. When first the angels fell, that didn't take God by surprise.

He'd already made a provision for that. And when Adam and Eve fell, that didn't take God by surprise either. He'd already made a provision, and he needed to be told them.

So what's the message there in the first two stories in the Bible for us today? That it doesn't matter how messed up you are in your life. You could be enslaved to drugs. Maybe you're so enslaved to internet pornography that you can't get out of it.

Maybe your marriage is so messed up. Maybe you've been unfaithful to each other. Maybe you've sinned terribly.

You're on the verge of divorce perhaps. Whatever it is, maybe there's a lot of confusion in the church. What's the message in the first two stories of the Bible? That the Holy Spirit's not going to give up.

He's going to work on you. He's going to bring you to himself, whether individual or a family or a church. That's the message of the Bible.

And how does he do it? He doesn't want us to live with a fake religiosity. Religiosity is like a fake counterfeit currency note. There are a lot of counterfeit dollar bills, and there's a thousand of them are not even worth one dollar.

It's trash. Religiosity is like that. And just like we would be careful if we knew that a lot of counterfeit currency going around a particular town, we'd be very careful every time you got a hundred dollar bill to see if it's genuine.

It's exactly the same way. We got to be careful that what we call Christianity, which all of you claim to have, that's why you're here this morning, is the genuine thing, the genuine article, and not a cheap counterfeit that the devil's put upon you. And that's what I want to help you to see.

I can't make you have it, but I can show you the marks of true spirituality. First of all, let me say this, that our attitude to Jesus Christ is tested, not by how often you come to a service, not by how well you can sing, not by how much you know the Bible, not even by whether you have given up your job to serve the Lord full-time in the ministry. It's tested by your attitude to sin.

That is the primary mark of your attitude to Jesus Christ. You can preach well, sing well, play an instrument well, come regularly in service, and be a volunteer for so many things, and yet your attitude to Christ can be totally wrong if your attitude to sin in your daily life is not right. If your attitude to sin in your home is not right.

This is the distinction between a religious person and a spiritual person. A religious person is careless about his attitude to sin, but he's very particular about the external aspects of Christianity. I was born again 55 years ago, and I've been serving the Lord full-time for 50 of those years, and I've had a lot of opportunity to observe Christians in many lands, and to see my own heart, and I've seen it's so subtle.

So I want you to be sure of your foundation, and sure that you got the genuine article. To begin with, the first step in the Christian life is to be forgiven and justified by the blood of Christ. So I want to start there.

It's like laying the foundation. A religious person seeks to be accepted by God on the basis of his own goodness and righteousness. He looks down on people who have a messed up life, and he feels, well I didn't mess up so much, so I must be more acceptable to God than them.

If you think like that, you're religious. If you look down on someone, maybe who is an adulteress and a murderer, and think that because you had the good fortune to be brought up in a God-fearing family, that you are more acceptable to God when you come to Christ, and then when that fellow comes to Christ, I want to say to you, you're just deceiving yourself. There is no difference before God between the person who grew up in a God-fearing home and didn't commit those terrible sins that other people did, and the worst criminal, the worst prostitute.

There is no difference. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and they're accepted only on the basis of Christ's death. That's very important to know that.

It's important to bring the mountains down and to lift up the valleys, to bring down those who think too much of themselves because of their righteousness. So this is the first thing. We are accepted on the basis of Christ's righteousness.

That means when I come to the Lord, the only way I can come is, Lord I'm a sinner, but Jesus died for me. I said I've been converted 55 years, and I've been serving the Lord for nearly 50 of those years, but how shall I enter God's presence today? I say, Lord I'm damned, but Jesus died for me, and that's why I'm accepted. Exactly the same basis on which this person who received Christ just this morning is accepted before God.

No difference at all. If I think that I'm accepted because I have been a believer so long, or I have served the Lord so long, I'm just fooling myself. This is what it means to be justified.

No matter how good a life we have lived after we are born again, let me repeat that, no matter how wonderfully we have lived, and how much we have served after we are born again, our acceptance before Christ is, before God our Father, is only because we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. That's what it means to be justified, and it's very important for all of us to understand that. So to come to that place of being justified, there are just two steps.

First of all, repentance. Repentance doesn't mean becoming perfect. It means I've turned around from my attitude to sin, and my attitude to God.

Formerly I was facing sin in the world, and my back was to God, and I've turned around. It doesn't mean I've achieved. It doesn't mean I've attained.

It doesn't mean I've reached the end of the road. It means I've turned around. So what is it, what does it mean when a believer falls into sin? This is what it means.

There is a difference between a believer falling and an unbeliever falling. When I'm running this race towards the Lord, when I fall down and I get up, I'm still going the same way. So I haven't changed my direction.

It's just that I slipped and fell, but I get up. But the unbeliever, when he sins, he's facing the wrong direction. That's the difference between a believer sinning and an unbeliever sinning.

And that's why it's important as soon as you fall to get up, confess your sin, be cleansed in the blood of Christ, and press on. So that's the first thing I want to say. Next, a religious person is more interested in his outer life before people.

A spiritual person is concerned about his inner life. And each of you can allow that scan to search your heart right now. Are you more interested in your external Christianity, or your inner life? By inner life, I mean your thoughts, your thought processes, what goes on in your mind, your attitudes to people.

You never express them, just inner attitudes. Your motives with which you do certain things, or are you only interested in the external? Your words must be nice, your actions must be nice. Let me read you a verse in 1 Samuel chapter 16 and verse 7. In 1 Samuel 16 and verse 7, it says, Man looks on the outward appearance.

The last part of that verse, 1 Samuel 16 and 7, the last part of that verse, God does not see as man sees. I wish we would be gripped by that one statement at the end of that verse. God does not see as man sees.

Let it be drilled in your heart, brothers and sisters. God does not see you as man sees you. For man looks at your outward appearance, but the Lord looks at your heart.

And if you're concerned about your outward appearance, you're in grave danger of ending up being a religious person and not a true Christian. The spiritual person is concerned about his heart. What is the condition of my heart? Let me show you a verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 5. I know there are some folks who get you to stand up when you read God's word.

I don't do that, because I read so many verses in my message, you'll be standing up, sitting up, and standing up and sitting down all the time. 1 Corinthians 4 verse 5, it says, do not go on, this is a very important verse, do not go on passing judgment on each other before the time. I wish, that's another verse I wish we would listen to.

Don't judge other people. Why? Because you only see the outward appearance. And that's not how God looks at that person.

But wait, I mean if you have a real desire to judge, God says I'll give you the opportunity, just wait. Wait till the Lord comes. Let's have that verse up there again, 1 Corinthians 4 verse 5. Wait until the Lord comes, because when he comes, just see what he's going to do.

There are two things that he's going to bring to light in that day, which will enable you to have a correct assessment of that person whom you're judging wrongly today. What are the two things he's going to bring in that, to light in that day? Remember, this is the final examination, and these are the subjects we're going to be judged in, going to be examined in. You might as well prepare for these subjects.

Why would you prepare for some subjects that are not appearing in the final examination? Here's the final examination. He's going to judge us once again, please, that verse, 1 Corinthians 4 verse 5. He's going to bring to light the, first of all, the things hidden in the darkness. I want you to look at that.

We're going to keep it up there for a little while. Things hidden in the darkness. That means the areas of your life which other people know nothing about.

The things that you do when the lights are switched off. The things that you do when nobody else is in the room. In the darkness.

The things hidden in darkness. That's number one, which God is going to expose in that day. Secondly, back to that verse 1 Corinthians 4 5. He's also going to reveal, disclose the motives of men's hearts.

Then each man's praise will come to him from God. So what are the two things again? The things hidden in darkness and the motives of my heart, not what I did, but what is the motive with which I did it. For example, preaching God's word can be a very good thing.

Singing can be a good thing. Serving God in different ways can be a good thing. But if we do it for some other reason than the glory of God, the Bible says, whatever you do, even if you eat or drink, do it all for the glory of God.

But supposing I do this, not for the glory of God, but with some selfish motive, which you can't see. Maybe I want money. Or maybe I'm not so carnal as wanting money.

Maybe I just want honor. There's really no difference between seeking for money or seeking for honor for men. The motive is wrong.

And when I thought I got a hundred percent or an A plus, and I discover in the final day that God gives me zero and fails me, and I wonder, how is that Lord? I did so much for you. The Lord says, you did it with wrong motives. Men saw what you did on the outside and they praised you and appreciated you.

But I saw all along the motive with which you did this for me and why you did that for me. I wasn't watching you when people appreciated you. I was watching what was your motive, what you were seeking, something for yourself.

We're going to get a lot of surprises when Christ comes again. And that's why Jesus said, many who are first on this earth will be lost in that day. And many whom you don't think much of, because they were not so gifted and they didn't stand up in the platforms and pulpits and impress you, they'll be first.

Because God saw what was faithfully in secret. So it's very important for us to see this difference. It's not so much how much we know and how much we preach.

For example, reading the Bible every day, it's a very good habit. It's without that I would not know the scriptures today. As soon as I was converted, I spent seven years diligently going into the Bible, not just once in the morning, any spare time I had.

What I discovered through the years is something more important than reading the Bible is obeying it. Religious people read the Bible, spiritual people obey it. So let me ask you, what do you think? Is it better to know the whole Bible from cover to cover and not obey it or obey just 10% of it? Definitely, if it's a choice, it's better to obey 10% than to know 100%.

Religious people know the 100%. The Pharisees knew so much of the scripture, they could even question Jesus. Obedience.

Don't devalue it, your spirituality by how much of the Bible you know, how much of the stories you know, how well you can preach and all that type of stuff. How much do you obey in your daily life? Remember the story Jesus said about the wise builder and the foolish builder? What is the difference between them? Do you know in Matthew chapter seven, at the end it says, they both listened to God's word. That could have been in a service like this, it could have been as they read the Bible, it could have been on the internet, they listened.

But the difference was one of them obeyed what he heard from God's word and his foundation was on rock. The other person heard, understood it, got excited about it, but he didn't obey. So you can hear, you can understand and you can get excited about it, but if you don't obey it, if you don't even seek God to obey it in your life, then you're living before man's face and you're a foolish person.

So a third thing I want to say is, what's the difference between a religious person and a spiritual person? A religious person seeks for man's approval. A spiritual person seeks for God's approval. Galatians chapter 1 verse 10, we read, this is the apostle Paul saying, Galatians chapter 1 and verse 10, the last part of that verse, if I were still trying to please men, I would not or I cannot be a bond servant of Christ.

One thing that completely disqualifies us from serving Christ, I can have all the abilities in the world, I can know the Bible from cover to cover, but if I seek to please men, I cannot be a servant of Jesus Christ. Think of your life, my brothers and sisters, do you do things to please men? I know I'm tempted very often when I preach God's word, not to offend people. Well, I don't want to offend them for my sake, but if God's word says something and I hold it back because I'm afraid somebody will be offended with it, then I'm seeking to please men.

If I preach in order to entertain people, I'm seeking to please men. I stand up in the pulpit and if I say something funny or crack a joke just to impress people, God's not going to be happy about that. I'm not saying that we should not say something humorous, I sometimes do that just to keep people awake so that they don't go to sleep, because very often at home I preach for one hour and I want them to be listening, but not to get honor, far from it.

It's very, very important, God's approval or man's approval. The Bible begins with the story of two children of Adam, Cain and Abel. We read in Genesis chapter 4, they both, you know the story, so I don't show you those verses, they both brought an offering to God.

And many people feel and have taught that because Abel brought blood of a lamb, he was accepted, and Cain brought grain, he was not accepted. Now I just want to tell you, that is not what the Bible says. That's a human interpretation of clever people who went to Bible school, but it's not in the Bible.

You know what the Bible says? You know, by the way, they were not bringing a sin offering. If it was a sin offering, of course they had to bring blood, that's clear. But it doesn't say they were bringing a sin offering, they were bringing a thanksgiving offering, and if you were a farmer, you brought 10% of your grain.

If you were a shepherd, you brought 10% of your flock. It was a thanksgiving offering, and in the book of Leviticus, there are thanksgiving offerings in which there is no blood. Perfectly acceptable to God.

So Cain was absolutely right. It says he was a, in the Cain was, he brought an offering from the fruit of the ground, because he was a tiller of the ground. Genesis 4, verse 2 and 3. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, so he brought from his flocks.

It's perfectly right. They were both bringing an offering of thanksgiving from their particular professions. But listen to this.

For Abel, God had regard. Genesis 4, 4. God had regard for Abel. That's what it says here in Genesis 4, verse 4. And therefore for his offering.

It doesn't say the Lord had regard for his offering, and therefore he accepted Abel. That's not what it says. He had regard for Abel, and therefore for his offering.

And he did not have regard for Cain, verse 5. And therefore he didn't accept his offering. You see what the Bible says? Like Jesus once said, when you come and bring your offering to God, and you know that you hurt somebody by some angry words that you spoke to him, leave your offering there. Because God won't accept you.

Why? It may be a very good offering. You may be offering a million dollars to God. He says, no, I don't want it.

You've got to apologize to that person and set matters right before you come. He has regard for you, then he will accept your offering. Very important.

Do you know, my brothers and sisters, that is the reason why many of our prayers don't go beyond the roof. You think you've prayed fervently, but you haven't settled some matter with someone. And God doesn't hear you.

You're wasting your time. Your all-night prayer meeting was a waste of time. You might as well have slept.

God didn't hear you, because there was something unsettled. Maybe you needed to apologize to your wife or your husband, and you thought you could pray, ignoring all that. Sorry.

He had regard for Abel, therefore he accepted his offering. He did not have regard for Cain, therefore he didn't accept his offering. Now, I don't know the reason for it, but there's something God saw in Abel's heart, which said, I'll accept his offering.

And there was something he saw in Cain's heart, which said, no, I can't accept his offering. I want to tell you, there's something God sees in your heart, which makes him accept your prayer. And there's something God sees in somebody else's heart, which does not make him accept his prayer.

The Bible says, James chapter 5, you heard it last Sunday, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. It's not a question of how fervently he prays alone, it's a question of whether he's a righteous man. That's James 5, Psalm 66, 18, you read the difference, the opposite of that.

If I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Prayer is like a telephone conversation with God, and God sees your number on the dial and says, I'm not going to pick up that phone. He doesn't even pick up the phone and just keep ringing.

You can pray, talk all night if you like, he's not going to listen. Seek for God's, a religious person doesn't think of all that. Religious person says, I'm going to pray, and I'm going to sing, I'm going to shout.

He doesn't listen. For example, we had a wonderful time of praise and thanksgiving this morning. How much of that from your mouth do you think God heard? I'll tell you, that depends on how you lived during the last week.

Not how well you sang this morning, oh no. If you want God's approval, it's not by shouting and praising without having a good conscience. I'll never forget a time when I was speaking in a big meeting in India, and it was a charismatic meeting and I was, they were time of singing.

I saw a man up there in the fourth or fifth row who was shouting and raising his hands and singing so well. I said, oh, I've got to go and meet this brother. At the end of the meeting, he was so full of joy.

So when I went up to meet him within about six feet of him, I could smell the alcohol. I said, oh, that's why he was so excited. It was some other spirit.

It was not the Holy Spirit. So I've learned from that time onwards, that happened about 40 years ago. I've learned from that time onwards not to be excited just because people sound so exuberant and raise and shout and all that.

I appreciate it. I hope it's coming from a pure heart. Otherwise, God does not have regard.

God's approval more than man's approval. That is so very, very important. Why is it there's so much competition among Christians? Isn't it because we want to get man's approval? You know, the carnal rejoicing that people can have, that we have more people in our church than you have in yours.

Really? Do you know that the Pharisees had more people in their group than Jesus had in his? Right. Jesus had only 12. He could have had more.

He was the greatest healer and miracle worker that Israel ever saw. And we read great multitudes would follow him. But when great multitudes followed him, he turned around and said to them, if you don't love me more than your father, mother, brother, sister, and all and your own life and more than all your possessions, you cannot follow me.

And many of them left. Is that what most preachers think about today? When they see a great multitude, they say, oh, time to take an offering. That's what they think.

But Jesus said, time to talk about discipleship. And you read in John chapter six, they got offended. And many of them left.

And you read at the end of John chapter six, there were only 12 left. And Jesus said, Are you also going to go? But they had some wisdom. Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? Those words you speak are hard.

But the other words of eternal life, the other words that bring us to God. So don't be fooled by numbers. Man looks for numbers and quantity.

God always looks for quality. He'd rather have 12 people who are wholehearted disciples than 1000s who are careless, casual Christians. With 12 people, he could turn the world upside down.

And a Christian faith that's lasted 2000 years. That's what he's looking for here in abundant life. Not crowds.

But men and women of quality. Disciples who keep their conscience clear, who will settle matters with their husband, wife or neighbor or anybody before they come to God who are more interested in their heart than in their outward appearance, who are more interested in God's approval than man's. Then I want to use and mention another thing.

A religious person thinks of Jesus as his master. A spiritual person looks at Jesus as his bridegroom. One is a relationship of fear.

Oh, I better do this. He's my boss. Jesus is my boss.

The spiritual person has a relationship of love with him. You know, when you have a relationship with Jesus as a boss, one mark is you feel he's hurt because you didn't do something right. When you feel that in the Old Testament, that's how you have to admit in the Old Testament, that's the relationship the Israelites had with God.

He was their boss. They could never call him dad. They could never look up and call him father.

It was not a loving relationship like a man, like a woman has with a man who's her bridegroom or husband. And that's why they had to pay income tax to God. It was called a tithe, by the way, in the Old Testament.

It was income tax, which was used, was income tax used for to pay God's servants as the government servants today. It was used to pay the Levites. But it was a relationship.

God had done all this for them. And from their income, they had to pay a tax called a tithe, 10%. But Jesus' relationship with his father is the example for us.

How much income tax does a wife pay to her husband? What is her attitude to her husband? What type of wife do you have if she says to you, I'll give you 10% of my life, my time, my everything. Jesus didn't have that relationship with his father. There was a relationship that Jesus had with his father on earth, which is a picture of the type of relationship we are to have with him.

And I want to read that to you in John 17 and verse 10. It's a beautiful verse. John 17 and verse 10.

Jesus, in his final prayer to his father said, all things, listen to this, never forget this verse. All things that are mine, father, are yours. And all that are yours are mine.

If you say to God, Lord, 10% of mine is yours. And 10% of yours is mine. Is that the relationship you want to have with Jesus? I don't want that.

I'm a bride, not one who works under a boss. I'm a bride. I'm his wife.

And I say to him, Lord Jesus, you didn't give 10% to me on the cross. You gave everything up. When you came from heaven to earth, there was not a single thing you held on to.

When you came to this earth, you emptied yourself completely and came for me. I love you, Lord. I'm going to show you my love, not by giving a little bit of my time, a little bit of my money, a little bit of my energy, all.

I don't want this 10% relationship with you, Lord. All that is yours. Now, I don't mean by that that you've got to put all your salary into the offering box.

That's not what I mean. I'm talking about a relationship with Jesus, where he tells you how much of that you can spend on yourself, how much of that you can set apart to buy a home, or how much he's interested in us. But I don't hold on to anything as if it's mine.

It's his. I'll use an illustration. This is all the wealth and property I have.

I can hold it like this as mine, on a tight fist, or I can hold it like this and say, Lord, it's yours. It's in my hand, but it's yours. You can take whatever you like from it anytime.

That's the type of relationship we're supposed to have with Jesus as our bridegroom. Whereas a religious person is always calculating. What is the minimum I have to do in order to get to heaven? I don't want to miss heaven, but what's the minimum I have to do? What's the minimum amount of money I must put in the box? What's the minimum amount I must serve the Lord? What's the minimum number of services I must go to in a week to be in good standing in the church? What's the minimum I have to do to keep a good testimony in the church? It's always this minimum, minimum, minimum.

It's a mark of a religious person. Imagine if you had a wife like that. You say, what is the minimum I have to do for my husband, and what's the minimum I have to do? You'd have a miserable married life.

And I want to tell you that Jesus is not looking for a wife like that. Let me tell you that. He's not so desperate that he's looking for a wife like that.

But a spiritual person says, Lord, I've got only one life. What is the maximum I can do for you in this one life before I leave? What is the maximum I can do for you in this one life? What is your attitude? In that simple word, minimum or maximum, you can discover. You get a scan and see whether you're a religious person who people think you're a wonderful Christian.

But in your inner attitude, I'm talking about your daily attitude, not when you come here on Sunday morning. In your daily life, if your attitude is, oh, I have to do something for God. Otherwise, I have a bad conscience.

I have to read the Bible for a few minutes, and I have to do a little bit. Of course, I've got a little money for God. You're not a bride.

You're a servant looking at the clock to see is it time to go home. You're not a son. You're not a bride.

You're a religious person, and it's good to face up to that. I want to tell you something that God's really not interested in your money, first of all. He's interested in your love, in your heart, your affection.

And he wants all of that. So, in conclusion, let me turn to Matthew chapter 7 and verse 21. What is the root cause of all these problems? Why do people become religious, not spiritual? Matthew 7, 21, Jesus speaking about the last day judgment, where he says, there are people who are going to come to him and say, Lord, Lord, and they will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Why? The fact that they come to him and say, Lord, means they had their doctrines right. The fact that they called him Lord, Lord means they were excited about it as well. You got your doctrines right, and you're excited about the Lord, and you're still going to go into God's kingdom.

Why is that? Because you did not do the will of my father. You respected the Bible by standing up when you read it, but you didn't obey it during the day. What's the use? God's not fooled by that.

Did you obey it? That's the question. The next verse, Matthew 7, 22. Many, not one or two, many, many, I don't know, millions will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, Lord, look what all we did for you.

We preached, we cast out demons, we did not one or two miracles, many miracles, and not fake ones, real ones. And I will say to them, verse 23, I never knew you. Depart from me.

You had religion, but you didn't love me. I never knew you means what? You know, in the Old Testament, Adam knew his wife. It was an expression to speak of the most intimate relationship between husband and

wife.

And when the Lord says, I never knew you, he's saying, you did so many things for me, but you never had that intimate relationship with me in your spirit when you love me. That's what the Lord told the elder of the church in Ephesus. You got so many good qualities, but you left your first love.

I hope you have understood something of what it means to be religious. It's because we want to do our own will, my way, my will, and we never allow the Holy Spirit, use the Spirit's power to crucify that, that we remain religious. Dear brothers and sisters, if you want to be spiritual, take up your cross, die to your own will every day in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's why we need the power of the Holy Spirit. I cannot do this without the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why I seek God to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day.

That's why I seek to keep my conscience clear. I say, Lord, I know the root of all sin is doing my own will. I say, Lord, Lord, but I do my own will.

But he who does the will of my father, and in order to do the will of God, I have to deny my own will. And if you have the habit and develop the habit, and you know, you start with an action and gradually it becomes a habit. That's how we do God's will.

You start with an action of denying yourself, saying, Lord, in this particular situation where this person has provoked me to anger, my will is to react in the same way. But I'm going to die to my will. And I'm going to do your will.

Here I am, Lord, sitting at the computer, and nobody's around. I'm strongly tempted to go to some pornographic website. That's my will.

It satisfies my lust. No, it's temptation. It's too strong.

I'm going to get up and go away from here. I want to run away from temptation. I want to please you.

These little, little, little choices over a period of years make you a truly spiritual man. Make those right choices. The times of ignorance, the Bible says, God overlooks.

But today, He's calling us to repent. So I'll leave you with that verse in closing. Acts 17, verse 30.

It's a beautiful verse. In Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 17, in verse 30, it says, God has overlooked the times of ignorance. Isn't that great? Maybe there were many things you heard today which you didn't know about.

You had times of ignorance right up until today. God says, I overlook them. I forgive you.

It's under the blood of Christ. It's gone. But now, He's declaring to men that we should repent.

Repent means turn around and say, Lord, I want to take heed to what I heard today. I want to do my part for this church to make my little contribution of being a spiritual member of this church, living according to the standards of God's Word. I want to obey God's Word and live according to that.

And that is the greatest contribution you can make to this church. And imagine if all of us decided to do that, we'll have a spiritual church, even if you're small in number.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/7Q7_eKgwFjo.mp4
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/religiosity-and-spirituality/>

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