

Religiosity or Spirituality #2 - the Two Streams

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a personal relationship with God, rather than just following rules and traditions, and warns against the dangers of religiosity.

Duration: 55:14

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 16:2

Topics: "Religiosity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that simply fasting, praying, and attending religious meetings does not guarantee salvation. He uses the story of the prodigal son to illustrate the difference between a worldly listener and a religious sinner. The preacher highlights that it is not how a person starts their life that determines their final result, but rather how they finish. He also warns against religiosity, explaining that being religious does not necessarily mean being spiritual, as seen in the example of the Pharisees in Jesus' time.

Transcript

I was speaking about the importance of hungering after God if we are to receive his best. We can get from God as much as we really long for. There is no partiality with Him.

All are exactly the same irrespective of education, race, wealth, knowledge, anything, intelligence. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him in any part of the world. Peter, we read that he had this idea that a lot of people in Israel had in those days that God would only meet with the people of Israel.

One day when he went to the house of Cornelius, who was a non-Israelite, and he was surprised to see the hunger that man had in his contact with God and how God poured out His Holy Spirit on him. He made a statement, he said, Now I realize that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation and every place, wherever people fear Him and seek Him, He is found by them. The rich, like Mary said, He sends empty away, but the hungry He has filled with good things.

This is always God's way. He looks around the world for those who have a hunger after Him, and He meets with them, and He bypasses all the others. That should alert us, we should wake up, because time is short, the coming of the Lord is near, and it is important that we do not miss out on what God has for us at this particular time.

Our subject has been religiosity or spirituality. Now a lot of people do not think there is a difference between being religious and being spiritual, and that is one of the great ways in which Satan deceives a lot of people into thinking that God has accepted them when He hasn't. The clearest example of that would be the Pharisees in the time of Jesus.

The Pharisees knew the Bible, Jesus knew the Bible. The Pharisees prayed, Jesus prayed. The Pharisees fasted, Jesus fasted.

The Pharisees went to the synagogue, Jesus went to the synagogue. The Pharisees had missionary activity. Jesus said they crossed land and sea to make cross legs.

Jesus was engaged in missionary activity. And yet the difference between the Pharisees and Jesus was the difference between hell and heaven. In spite of all this, in spite of all the things they did which were so similar, the Pharisees were religious, Jesus was spiritual.

This contrast comes many many times in the Gospels. In the story of the prodigal son, you see the father and the elder brother. The father is like God, and the elder brother is like the Pharisees.

So there again you see the contrast between a spiritual man represented by the father and a religious person represented by the elder son. Jesus once told the Pharisees that there is more hope for the, if I were to paraphrase his words, there is more hope for the prostitutes and thieves than for all of you to enter into God's kingdom. Now if you got up in a church, in a respectable Christian church on a Sunday morning and preached what Jesus preached, that the prostitutes and thieves have more chance of getting into God's kingdom than you people who come Sunday mornings to the meeting.

Well, they do the same thing to you that they did to Jesus. In one place it says they interrupted him in his sermon in Luke chapter 4, pulled him down from the pulpit and took him to a cliff to throw him down to kill him. But we don't have such preachers nowadays who tell the truth straight, unfortunately.

Jesus turned to a bishop once and said, you must be born again. You ever heard of anyone telling a bishop you must be born again? Nicodemus was a bishop. The closest that we can think of in terms of today's religious system is a bishop.

That's what he was. This old white bearded man. He wasn't an adulterer or a thief.

Jesus said you must be born again. So we find that in the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, his biggest conflict was not with sinners. It was with religious people.

You never find Jesus lambasting and hitting out at the prostitutes and thieves and drunkards and gamblers. You read the Gospels. You read just the four Gospels and see who Jesus preached against the most.

I never see him condemning a thief or a murderer or a prostitute. Not that he approved of them. He always told them, I don't condemn you but don't sin anymore.

He always concluded his message with don't sin anymore. It's wrong what you did. You shouldn't do it again.

But he was always very merciful to them. But we don't see much mercy in his attitude toward the religious leaders of his time and to the holy people who sat in the churches or the synagogues in those days. He

exposed that religious veneer that they had, stripped them of it and that's what infuriated them.

You know they didn't kill Jesus because he washed people's feet or loved his enemies or anything like that. It wasn't because of a message of love and goodness that they wanted to kill him. You preach the message of love and goodness and being a servant and all that and they'll give you a medal.

They won't crucify you. But why did they crucify him? Because he exposed their hollow, empty religious traditions which meant nothing to God. They had rules that you couldn't do this on the Sabbath day and you couldn't do that on the Sabbath day and you couldn't do the other thing and at the same time they were exploiting poor widows who couldn't pay the rent, turning them out of their houses and were so hard on poor sinful people that Jesus said this is all hypocrisy.

This is not a true representation of what God is like. When Jesus came to earth, the only picture that people had of God was what the Pharisees gave them in Israel and that was a caricature of what God was really like. God wasn't like that at all.

And yet the poor people who sat in the synagogue and saw these old 60-70 year old Pharisees get up and preach, they thought this is what God is like. I mean if you had gone to Peter before he had met Jesus, say when Peter was around 25-28 years old, and if you had asked him, well Peter can you tell me the names of 4 or 5 really godly men whom you have met in your life? I think he would have given you the name of the 4 or 5 Pharisees in his synagogue. He said these are the most godly men I have met, I mean I have seen them from childhood, they are so holy, they are always praying, they are always fasting and they know the Bible so well and they preach such profound messages in the synagogue so profound I can't even understand what they are saying.

These are the holy men. It is very similar to today's Christianity. And then imagine the shock he got when Jesus got up in the synagogue and hit out at all these fellows and said, you are all on your way to hell.

How can you escape the damnation of hell you hypocrites, you humbugs. Can you imagine the shock Peter got when the people who he thought were the most godliest men on earth, Jesus says they are the first people to go to hell. That must have required a lot of reorienting of his thinking.

There you see how religious people can fool a lot of undiscerning simple people and make them feel that we are very spiritual. I mean the whole synagogue was fooled by these religious leaders till Jesus came and exposed the whole thing. And if Jesus hadn't come, these fellows would have continued comfortably in their religion, fool people, collecting money from them, deceiving them that everything was okay and they were on their way to heaven, when they weren't.

Neither the leaders nor the synagogue. Jesus called them blind leaders of the blind. That's what he said.

And he said, the problem is, it's not just the leader who falls into the ditch, the blind fellow falls, the follower falls into the ditch too. And that's what Jesus infuriated the Lord. He says, okay, you leaders, if you want to go and fall in the ditch, go and fall.

I'm not going to stop you. But why do you lead these other poor fellows into it? And that's exactly the condition in Christendom today. I mean, I've been a Christian 42 years since I was born again.

I've gone around in many countries and all the continents and seen people in various denominations. And I find the same thing in the old time denominations and the new time, new denominations that have come

over the last 40, 50 years. It's exactly the same story.

People become religious. There's a tendency, just like there's a tendency in man to sin. What many people haven't discovered is there's a tendency in man to be religious.

Man is a religious creature. All over the world, in every country, human beings have a problem with anger. You know that.

That's not any particular race or any particular community or among educated people or uneducated people. All children of Adam have a problem with anger. All children of Adam have a problem with sexual sin.

It's universal. In exactly the same way, as universal as anger and sexual sin are, is the problem of religion. And that's what many people don't realize.

Man is a religious creature. And that's why you have such a lot of religions. They kill each other in the name of religion and hurt one another and feel that no other person is going to God except we.

This is characteristic not only of false religions, it's characteristic of a lot of groups in Christendom too. So religion, I believe, is a tremendous hindrance to Christianity. I don't know how many of you have ever heard anybody say such a thing, that religion is a tremendous hindrance to Christianity.

The Christian religion. You know, when I witness to non-Christians in my own country, and I want to tell them about Jesus Christ as a way of salvation, there are a couple of things I have to say to them as an introduction. And one of the first things I have to tell them is, listen, I'm not talking to you about Christianity.

I'm talking to you about Jesus Christ. And I say there's a lot of difference between the two. And I also want to say to you that 90% of Christians you've met in your life are not Christians.

Because I have to say that to him. Otherwise, when I'm talking about the way of salvation, he'll be probably thinking of some Christian who cheated him 10 years ago, and somebody else who harmed him in some way who called himself a Christian. And he'll endure what I say, but he won't have any respect for what I say until I tell him, first of all, listen, 90% of Christians are not Christians.

I mean, they were born in a Christian family, so what? It doesn't make a difference. Just because some water was sprinkled on their head, and they were given a particular name from the Bible didn't make them holy. No.

I had all that. I was given a Christian name, some water was sprinkled on my head when I was a little baby. But for 19 years, I was just a sinner like anybody else.

Even though I never got out of bed without saying the Lord's Prayer every morning. It didn't make a difference. I was a sinner like anybody else, till Christ came into my life, and I was born again.

It's like being part of another race. To me, the difference is, we all agree there's a difference between animals and human beings. I don't know whether you'll be shocked if I say there's just as much difference between a person who's not born again and a person who is born again.

You wouldn't agree? I'll tell you, it's even more. There's animal nature, there's human nature, there's divine nature. You think the difference between animal nature and human nature is not as much as between

human nature and divine nature? The difference between human nature and divine nature is much more than the difference between a human nature and an animal.

It's absolutely revolutionary when a person is really born again. And that's why the devil has counterfeited it. He's counterfeited it so much, that I think a lot of people who say they're born again are not.

They've gone through a formula, saying Lord Jesus come to my heart or something like that, but there's never been a radical repentance in their life. I know a lot of people who come to our church who, they thought themselves were born again before they came to our church and they spent a couple of years in our church and they say, Brother Zach, I realize now I never knew what it was to be born again because I never knew what repentance was. And I never knew what repentance was because I never knew what sin was.

Repentance is turning from sin. How do you know whether you're turning from sin if you don't know what sin is? How can you turn east if you don't know which side is south and north and west and east? I mean, you've got to know where you're turning. And that's a condition of a lot of people.

When we read the scriptures, we find that religion is something that started way back in the beginning. And the whole Bible has got these two streams of religiosity and spirituality all the way through. And I want to show you that.

First of all, if you turn to Genesis, do you know what was the temptation with which Satan came to Eve? Well, I mean, everybody knows it was to eat of that tree, the forbidden tree, Genesis chapter 3. But what is it, you know, in every temptation there's something attractive. There's something that attracts us and we yield to temptation because we know that if I get that or I do that, I will get some benefit. It could be pleasure, it could be money, it could be something.

But that is the essence of temptation. If something does not give you any benefit, there's no temptation in it. And you wouldn't be tempted to do something if you didn't feel that by doing it, you'd get something out of it.

So what was it that the devil told Eve that she would get if she ate of that tree? You know what the devil told her? You will be like God. I don't know that you noticed that. Verse 5 of Genesis 3. The devil told her, God knows the day you eat from it, your eyes will be open and you will be like God.

So what did Eve reach out for? It wasn't to commit murder. The devil didn't tell Eve, go and kill your husband. I don't think she would have succumbed to that temptation.

There was no adultery or theft or anything possible at that time. The temptation that came to Eve was the temptation to be like God. Can that be a temptation? That's what it was.

It was along the line of religion that Satan tempted Eve. That's what I want you to see. It wasn't to make her spiritual, to make her religious.

Now when Jesus came, what message did Jesus come with? You know the message Jesus came with? You can be like God. Exactly the same. And yet, this is deception.

You know the line is so fine, if you don't discern, religiosity and spirituality can look so similar. Like I said, the Pharisees prayed, Jesus prayed, the Pharisees knew the Bible, Jesus knew the Bible. The Pharisees

did missionary work, Jesus did missionary work.

The Pharisees went to the meetings regularly, Jesus went to the meetings regularly, and yet there was a world of difference. It was light and darkness, the difference between Jesus and the Pharisees. And when Jesus says you can be like God and the devil says you can be like God, the difference between the two, even though the words are the same, is the difference between light and darkness.

Two people can say exactly the same thing from a pulpit. One may be a servant of God and the other may be a servant of the devil. And yet the words are exactly the same.

It's the spirit. What did the devil mean when he told Eve, you can be like God? You're going to be like God in position, authority, knowledge, particularly knowledge and wisdom, all those things which will make you somebody great. When Jesus came and said you can be like God, he, what he meant was that you'd be like God in character, in love, goodness, and washing other people's feet, and serving them, and denying yourself to bless them, and sacrifice.

They're two completely different messages. And yet the words are the same. And you find religious leaders tend to be like God to people.

Cult leaders, religious leaders, religious leaders, they like to have authority over people by being like God to them, in authority, in position, in directing their lives, in controlling them, in Christendom. Whereas a truly spiritual man will be like God in the way Jesus spoke about it, and that is in seeking to serve them, and bless them, and humble himself to serve them, and deny himself, and sacrifice many things. And yet the words are the same.

You can be like God. So this is where, if you're not able to see deception, Satan can deceive us. He deceived Eve by tempting her, saying that you can be like God, and led her on the way to hell.

And today, Satan can speak through people in a church, and lead people to be very, very religious. And they're just a little closer to hell at the end of it. You know those Pharisees were closer to hell after they became Pharisees than before.

Jesus once said that the harlots and tax collectors will get into God's kingdom before you. Meaning that they were not in God's kingdom, but they were closer. Whereas these Pharisees were so far away.

And yet the people in Israel never thought like that. The people thought the harlots and tax collectors were far away from God's kingdom. The Pharisees were pretty close.

And Jesus said it wasn't true. So there you see that religion tends to take people away from God. Not only all the false religions, where you can see very clearly how they have led them away from God into the worship of idols, into worshipping animals and demons, and also in all these fundamentalist groups in different religions that lead them to kill one another, to kill innocent people in the name of religion, to sacrifice themselves for promoting their religion by killing others.

You know this is obviously satanic. But in the Christian religion too, religion tends to lead people away from God. If you read about the Middle Ages, how Christians killed Christians.

One group of Christians killed another group of Christians. And Christians who believed in one form of baptism killed other Christians who believed in another form of baptism. Christians who believed in

salvation through the church killed those Christians who believed in salvation by faith in Christ.

They were Christians, killing Christians. In the 1500s, in the 1600s, lots of them. And yet, is that what Jesus came to teach? That's not Christianity.

But he warned his disciples. I don't know whether you are familiar with this verse in John's Gospel in chapter 16, where Jesus said, the time is coming, he said, when, John 16 in verse 2, and where you read synagogue here, you can read in today's terms a church. They will throw you out of their churches, and an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that they are serving God.

That's amazing. How in the world can anyone ever think by killing others you are serving God? But we see that in the world today. You see it in the newspapers.

People who think they are serving God by blowing themselves up and killing other innocent civilians. But it's happened in Christianity too. If you go back 300-400 years, it's exactly what people did.

They said, this fellow has got a wrong teaching, because he doesn't agree with our church. And it's better to kill him than allow him to run loose and deceive so many people. So they actually killed him.

There were even people who called themselves believers who killed other Christians and thought they were serving God there by protecting a whole lot of people from deception by killing this man. And the first religious murder was when Cain killed Abel. So religious murder started right from the time of the second generation of humanity.

So the Bible begins with religious murders. A religious man killing a spiritual man. That's essentially what Cain and Abel were.

You see, Cain was not an atheist by the way. I hope you know that. He was not an idol worshipper.

He never worshipped any idols. He was not an atheist. And more than that, he was a person who believed in the true God.

The God who created his father Adam. And when Cain offered a sacrifice, he was not offering it to some idol. And he was not an atheist.

If he were an atheist, he would have brought no offering. It was not Baal or any such thing that Cain offered his offering to. It was to the true God.

And yet, he was not a spiritual man. He was a religious person who went through the motions of his religion and thought he was accepted by God because of that. And God did not accept him.

So we mustn't forget that right in the beginning of the Bible you have these two streams. The religious stream and the spiritual stream. Religiosity and spirituality that came from our forefather Adam.

Cain and Abel. And both coming to God. Both coming and bringing their offerings.

And I believe that both brought the best of their offerings. I don't believe that Cain brought some third-rate rotten stuff. He brought an offering from the fields where he was working and a good offering to God.

And Cain, Abel brought a lamb because he was a keeper of the sheep. Now, one of the common misconceptions among Christians who don't read the Bible carefully, and there are lots of them like that, is

that God accepted Abel's offering and therefore he accepted Abel. Now, if you haven't, if you have heard what preachers say and you haven't read the Bible, that's what I'm sure you believe.

Now I want to show you what the Bible says. Genesis 4 and verse 4. Did the Lord accept Abel because of his offering? Really? Did the Lord accept Abel because of his offering? Read carefully. It says in Genesis 4, the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering.

He had regard for, he accepted Abel first. So when we read in Hebrews 11 that by faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain. Why was it a better sacrifice? Was it only because he shed blood there? You know that's the mistake a lot of people make.

They say, well, I claim the blood of Christ. I'm okay. Oh, just hang on.

Wait a minute. That's not enough. It's true that salvation is only through the blood of Jesus Christ.

It's not by our works. But the Bible also says faith without works is dead. And an intellectual belief in the blood of Christ, James goes on to say, is no better than the faith the devil has.

It says here, the Lord had regard for Abel. Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks at the heart. And God saw something in Abel's heart which made him accept it.

The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite spirit. And that's what he saw in Abel. It's not all written there, but I know why God accepted him because other passages of scripture tell us whom God accepts.

Isaiah 66 verse 2 says, to this man will I look, the man who's got a broken spirit and who trembles at my word. So many verses like this that teach us that it's a brokenness in the spirit that makes a man acceptable to God. And so two people can come with the same words, we claim the blood of Jesus Christ.

And one man's got a broken spirit because of sorrow for his sin. And the other man is just taking advantage of the blood of Christ as an excuse to, well, you know, cheap grace, you can keep on sinning and take advantage of God. And God sees a tremendous difference and yet outwardly they look the same.

They're both sitting in the same church singing the same songs about the blood of Christ and one's on his way to heaven, the other's on his way to hell. And that's the thing that needs to be exposed. And I believe that any preacher or any leader who does not expose that difference is actually guilty of a whole lot of people in his congregation who go to hell.

And their blood is on his hands. The Bible says that elders are those who are going to give an account to God one day. I've said that often.

We have more than 200 people coming to our church in Bangalore and then I also have a responsibility for many other churches. And I tell them, listen, I take seriously my responsibility to make sure, not to make sure that you all go to heaven, I can't do that, but to make sure that you know the way clearly. And then that you can choose whether you want to go there or not.

And to point out that those who live in sin, those who commit adultery, those who murder, those who cheat, those who tell lies, go to hell, that's obvious. I mean, I don't need to emphasize that. But to point out that those who fast and pray and come to the meetings can also go to hell along with these murderers and thieves, that's my business to point it out because that's not so obvious.

When you think of the story of the prodigal son, what I see in those two sons is a worldly sinner and a religious sinner. The younger son is the worldly sinner, obviously evil, living with harlots and wasting his father's time and money and everything. And the other is the religious sinner, the one who looks so holy and told his father, I've never disobeyed your commandment.

And what I see in that story is this. In a nutshell, the story is this. A man had two sons.

At the beginning of the story, the younger son is outside the house and the elder son is inside the house. And at the end of the story, the younger son is inside the house and the elder son is outside the house. That in a nutshell is that story.

And you got to find out how this elder son ended up outside the house and how the younger son ended up inside the house. Because it's not the way a man starts his life that determines what's going to be the final result. It's like an Olympic race in the Olympic games.

You never get anyone getting a prize for starting well. Nobody ever gets a medal for that. A lot of people who start well don't even finish in a marathon race.

They drop by the wayside. The prizes are always awarded to those who finish well. The same with God.

And a lot of people who start badly sometimes end up first. That's how we see in the story of the prodigal son. He started really badly.

But see where he finished. And the elder son started off so well. Where did he finish? What about the thief on the cross who got saved? How did he start? He was doing badly almost to the last few hours of his life.

And yet that evening, the son of God was walking with him in paradise. Amazing. A man who started so badly.

Everybody who knew him had no hope for him. God had. God saw a broken spirit in him.

And a lot of people who were standing at the foot of the cross, who were mocking at Jesus, who were holy people, they never made it to God's kingdom. You see how God has led people away from God. There is a lot of difference between being religious and being spiritual.

And Cain and Abel are heads of these two streams. Jesus himself said about Abel as righteous Abel. In Matthew 23, when he is speaking about the Pharisees, he said from the blood of righteous Abel down to Zechariah whom you killed between the temple and the altar, their blood is going to be required from this generation.

So Jesus himself called Abel a righteous man. God had regard for Abel because he was a righteous man. And it didn't mean that God didn't want to save Cain.

Just like in the story of the prodigal son, whom did the father love, the younger son or the elder son? What's the answer? Both. Whom did he go outside the house for, the elder son or the younger son? Both. He went outside the house to welcome the younger son and when the elder son wouldn't come inside the house, he went outside the house for him too.

Whom does God love more, the prostitute or the man in brokenness, sooner than the Pharisee who thinks he is already inside? That's the problem. Who thinks that because of all his religious activity, God has to

be pleased with him. But God isn't.

He is, God looks at the heart. Now you find today among Christians, there are Christians who go to some church and they say, well everything is so dead here. People sit quietly, they don't make any noise and they are so quiet.

And then to rectify that, they make an assembly where there is a lot of noise and a racket and a lot of jumping around and it's very impressive to someone who doesn't know God. And they think that they have pleased God. I mean all that gives an impression, boy these fellows are really excited about their religion.

And I say, man looks on the outward appearance, God looks at the heart. And we'll get a lot of surprises when Christ comes again. That all this external activity may not indicate true spirituality in the heart.

That also may be religion. You see how people's temperaments are different. There are people with a melancholic or a phlegmatic type of temperament who are more inward looking and quiet.

And then there are other people who are extroverts and choleric type of temperaments who are very exuberant. So these two types of people will tend to go to two different types of churches. It's got nothing to do with their being spiritual.

It's just that their temperament makes them gravitate towards one, the exuberant type likes to go to an exuberant church and the quiet melancholic type likes to go and sit in a church where they don't make so much noise. Now which of the two is spiritual? I say God looks at the heart. God is not near noisy people or quiet people.

He is near broken hearted people. And you can find them in both groups. And that's where we can be deceived.

And that's where each group looks down on the other group thinking oh they are not spiritual. They say those fellows are noisy, they are not spiritual. Those people look down here and say these fellows are so quiet, they are not spiritual.

I say spirituality has got nothing to do with noise or silence. It's got to do with brokenness. God is near the broken hearted.

I remember years ago when I said Lord, can you tell me the secret of your being near me all the time. Particularly when I stand up to preach, I want you to be near me. If you are near me, I am okay.

And not only when I am preaching, when I am tempted, I want you to be near me. If you are near me, I will overcome any temptation in the world. I want you to be near me when there are problems.

I want you to be near me. If you are near me, I am not afraid of facing any problem in the world. I want you to be near me in times of trial, times of temptation, times of financial hardship.

It doesn't matter how hard things are financially. Lord, if you are near me, I am okay. And the Lord gave me one verse in Psalm 34 that really helped me.

Verse 18. It says the Lord is near the broken hearted. Boy, that was really good for me.

And what the Lord said to me was that if you are broken hearted, I will always be near you. It's got nothing to do with how much noise you make or how much noise you don't make. It's got to do with your heart, not with your mouth.

It's the heart. Broken because of sorrow for sin. Broken because of a longing after God.

I am not all that I want to be. See, a broken man is not always pointing his finger at other people and criticizing everybody else. He has no time for that.

He is so taken up with his own failure and shortcoming that he has no time to find fault with other people. See, the church we belong to, I mean, started as a little meeting in my home 27 years ago. And many people came together from different parts of the world.

Many people came together some from other religions and some from dead religious systems in Christendom. But we came together and I remember a man once came to me and said, Brother Zak, I'd like to join your church. I am also fed up with this particular denomination.

And I'd like to leave that and come to your church. So I told him, I said, Listen, if you are fed up with that denomination and you join us, one day you will be fed up with us too. Because we are not a bunch of perfect people.

We are also sinners, saved by grace. But I said, you know, we are a bunch of people who are fed up with ourselves, not with other people or other denominations. And he said, if you are fed up with yourself, oh, welcome.

You will have glorious fellowship among us. You know, there is a difference between leaving a church because I am fed up with that church and all the way everybody behaves over there. They don't show any love and all these criticisms.

Oh, I have heard a lot of criticisms like that. And there is a difference between that type of person who wants to leave a church because he is fed up with everything and all the people over there and the system and everything else and a person who is fed up with himself. God, I am such a sinner.

I am fed up that I don't seem to get victory over my anger. I don't seem to get victory over my lust. I don't seem to get victory over my love of money.

That's what bothers me more than all the wrong things they do in that system. If you are like that, there is hope for you. Tremendous hope.

That's what it means to be broken hearted. A broken hearted man is not fed up with what's going on in his church. He is fed up with what's going on in his own heart.

That's what bothers him. That's what makes him broken before God. A broken hearted husband is not fed up with his wife.

He is fed up with himself. A broken hearted wife is not fed up with her husband and all the things she expects him to do which he doesn't do. She is fed up with himself, with herself.

That's the secret of fellowship. Two broken hearted people will have wonderful fellowship. But religious people, oh, it's very difficult.

I will never forget an American missionary couple that came to India. Very fine people. Very sacrificial in their service.

They lived many, many, many years in India serving the people of India. I was a young Christian when I saw them. They were much older than me, more than double my age.

They had served in India longer than I had lived in India. But only one problem this missionary couple had with each other. They could not stand each other.

I mean to such an extent that they lived in two different towns and worked in two different places. One was serving God over there and one was serving God over here because they couldn't stand each other. I say what Christianity can... I mean however zealous you may be and sacrifice you may make and simple you may be.

I say if you can't show that you can live together in the same home. I say what message have you got for all the heathen people in our country? Well, one of the things I saw there was the importance of the Christian home if we are to be true witnesses for Christ. Religion does not give importance to home relationships.

Religion gives importance for religious activity. Never mind, neglect your wife and children. Serve the Lord brother.

Go and do this and that and the other thing. What's the result? Children grow up wayward. It's true.

I saw this in my country that the children of a lot of missionaries and Christian workers and pastors were wayward. They were not following the Lord. People who claimed to be very zealous in the Lord's work.

I don't judge them. I'm not their judge. God is their judge.

But it put such a fear in my heart that when I got married, I said, Lord, I don't want to be in that category. I'd rather not go out and travel and preach the gospel. I'd rather bring up my children properly to fear God and to follow you than be so zealous in doing this, that and the other all over the place for the Lord and lose my own children.

You know, there's a tremendous warning in the Old Testament about a man called Eli. You read in one Samuel about a man who was a high priest. He was the biggest leader in Israel and his children were the most wayward in the whole country.

They were exploiting the people, taking money from them, sleeping with the women in the temple and all this. And the father never did anything. He just gave them a gentle word of rebuke and said, well, you know, boys, it shouldn't be like that.

And they continued doing the same old thing. And God sent a prophet to that man, a little boy called Samuel. And he spoke God's word to this old Eli.

That's not what I was coming to. When Samuel grew up, his children became wayward. That's what I was trying to say.

The people of Israel told Samuel, you're all right, Samuel, but your children, they're taking bribes. How can you appoint them as judges over us? I don't know whether you noticed it. Let me show it to you.

One Samuel, chapter 7, verse 15. Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. He used to go annually on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah.

He judged Israel in all these places and his return was to Ramah. So here was a man who was busy traveling in the Lord's work all the time, all through the year. He used to go on a circuit, going here, there, everywhere, and then return to his home and start the circuit again.

And what was the result? Chapter 8, verse 3. His sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice. And the elders of Israel came to Samuel and said, behold, you've grown old and your sons are not walking in your ways. Now this is a man who when he was a young boy had pointed out that another man had not brought up his children in a godly way.

We really have to fear. I don't want to criticize Samuel. I think he was a very godly man, amazing prophet in his time.

But the fact remains, the Bible says his children did not walk in his ways. David was a man after God's own heart. His children did not walk.

And yet, there was another man who didn't go around traveling so much in the Lord's work, and that was Abraham. You know what God said about Abraham? In Genesis, I want you to turn to chapter, Genesis chapter 18, verse 19. I've chosen Abraham in order that he may command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing justice and righteousness.

And because he does that, brings up his children in godly ways, the Lord will be able to fulfill in Abraham whatever he had spoken about. So I see that it was because Abraham brought up Isaac in a godly way, that God's purposes for Abraham could be fulfilled. Religion does not place much emphasis on the way you bring up your children.

Religion does not place much emphasis on having a godly home. Provided you're active in doing something in the church, you're okay. And you ease your conscience by saying, well, I'm doing something for the Lord.

The Lord says no. How are your children? Let me see how you brought them up. Noah, he not only saved himself, he saved his three sons.

They did what he did. So you see, religion has been through the years one of the great deceptions of Satan, with which he's led people away from God. And Jesus exposed it ruthlessly in his time.

And I find that there are not enough people exposing it ruthlessly in our time. And so a lot of people are deceived. Now, it's not a popular thing to expose the hollowness of Christian religion.

If your interest is to make money as a preacher, you won't make money preaching on such subjects. You usually get thrown out. I remember once I was invited to a large convention in India with about 12,000 people there.

And I was asked to speak for three days. And after two days the pastors came to me and said, we don't want you to speak on the third day. I said, fine, God bless you all.

Because I spoke on righteousness. I spoke on righteousness in money matters. That pastors and preachers must be righteous in money matters.

And that's what disturbed them. So I've had that experience more than once. So, but I believe that's the greatest need to distinguish between being religious and being spiritual.

That's one of the things I want to share in these days that I'm here. So that we're not deceived. So that the light of heaven shines clearly from scripture.

This stream that started with Cain and Abel, when you come to the end of the Bible, it ends in Babylon and Jerusalem. You know the book of Revelation, if you read the last four chapters or four or five chapters of Revelation, chapter 17 to 22, that's six chapters. You read it ends with Babylon and Jerusalem.

That's how the Bible ends. Babylon is a religious system that doesn't have God. And Jerusalem is a spiritual church, the bride of Jesus Christ.

But where did it begin? It began with Cain and Abel, right through, continues to the end. You read about Jesus and the Pharisees in between in the same stream. One is in one side and the other is on the other.

Yet they're both sitting in the same synagogue. And it can happen today. Today we are in between.

We haven't reached the end of Revelation yet. The streams are flowing and all of us are in one of these two streams. Just make sure you're in the right one.

And that's the purpose of what we're preaching from God's word. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that the light of heaven will shine brightly upon us as we look into your word.

Light from heaven delivers us from all deception. And we pray that we will see that light and let it shine into our hearts and deliver us from every type of deception. That we can walk in the light as Jesus, as God is in the light, as Jesus walked in the light all his days.

Help us each one, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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