

# Religiosity or Spirituality - God-Centred Not Man-Centred

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of obedience to Christ, rather than just following rules and rituals, in order to be truly spiritual.*

**Duration:** 59:21

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Philippians 2:5, 1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Timothy 4:15

**Topics:** "Religiosity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being absorbed in the things of God and not being distracted by the devil or the world. He uses the example of sports enthusiasts who are completely focused on watching a game to illustrate this point. The speaker also highlights the need for our spiritual progress to be evident to others, just like Timothy's progress was visible to the people in his church. He then explores the concept of having the attitude of Christ in various aspects of our lives, such as how we view others, material things, and difficult circumstances. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the difference between being saved and being forgiven, emphasizing that Jesus came to save us from sin rather than to make us prosperous.

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## Transcript

I'd like to turn to a verse in Philippians, in chapter 2. We've been thinking together about the difference between being religious and being spiritual, and how Jesus is our example of a spiritual man. Much more than he asked people to believe on him, he asked people to follow him. We have a lot of admirers of Christ in the world today, but very few followers.

And yet Jesus never said, admire me, he always said, follow me. Follow me, follow me, were the words he frequently said to people who he called. And if we don't take that invitation or that command seriously, to actually seek to follow in Christ's footsteps, if we don't make him our example, if we don't obey the command which says, let us run the race, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

If we don't do that, it's very easy, no matter what spiritual experience we may have had, to be just a religious person all our days on earth, and never achieve the full potential of what God wants to accomplish through us in our earthly life. See, as I said earlier, it's not a question of just going to heaven when we die. It's very, very unfortunate that for lots of believers, their only goal in life is to go to heaven

when they die, or somehow escape hell.

As though Jesus came primarily to save us from hell. You know, when we ask people the question, are you saved? What do you mean? Supposing you were to ask me that question. Are you saved? And I would say, well, I'm being saved.

You say, what do you mean? Are you saved or not? I say, I'm being saved. Would you understand my reply? We expect a direct answer, yes or no. Why is that? Because in our mind, saved means saved from hell.

And do you know that in the entire Bible, you'll never find that expression even once. Saved from hell. It's just a religious expression.

The Bible never talks about being saved from hell. The Bible never talks about Jesus coming to save us from hell. It does speak about being saved from the wrath of God, but it speaks much more about being saved from sin.

How many of you know the very first promise in the New Testament? The first promise in the New Testament is found in Matthew 1.21, where it says, you shall call his name Jesus, the angel told Joseph, because he shall save his people from their sins. Not save them from hell, but save them from their sins. There are a lot of believers who are saved from hell who are not saved from their sins.

That's the unfortunate thing. And that's why the name of Christ is dishonored so much, because a lot of people who claim to be saved from hell are not saved from sin. They're still living defeated lives, just like the unbelievers around them.

Sometimes, the daily behavior of a Christian, unfortunately, is not very much different from the behavior of many unbelievers. Their goals and ambitions are very often the same. And that's because being saved from sin has not been emphasized in Christendom as much as being saved from hell.

Religious people want to be saved from hell. I mean, after all, which sensible person wants to go to hell? If you gather a crowd of 10 million people and ask them, all those who want to go to hell, raise your hands. Nobody will raise their hands.

Nobody wants to go to hell. You say, all those who want to go to heaven, raise their hands. Everybody will raise their hands.

There's no great virtue in wanting to be saved from hell. There's no great virtue in wanting to go to heaven. The important question is, do you want to be saved from sin? How eager are you to be saved from anger, lusting with your eyes, bitterness, jealousy, love of money, covetousness, greediness, impatience? Oh, we could go on with that list.

I don't think many Christians are eager about this. I mean, their attitude will be, well, it's a good thing if I could dare to get it, but I don't think there's much hope of my getting out of all these things on this earth. Maybe one day when I go to heaven.

So their understanding of being saved from sin is, well, we will be saved when we go to heaven. No. Romans chapter 6 says, right here on this earth, sin will not have dominion over you.

Because you're not under law, but under grace. So one mark of being under grace is that sin loses its power over us. But if you spend your life concentrating on being saved from hell and you're satisfied with that, like I said yesterday evening, you'll never go beyond what you're satisfied with.

If you're satisfied with just having your sins forgiven, I can guarantee you'll never get anything more than that on the earth. But if you're like those people Jesus spoke of who persisted and kept on knocking at the door till the man opened and kept on going after the judge like the widow till she got what she wanted, such people will get more. Because they are persistent.

Spiritual people are persistent in their pursuit of God to get not what they want, but what the Bible promises. There are a lot of things we want which the Bible doesn't promise. We don't persist after God for such things.

For example, there's a lot of teaching today on Jesus making Christians prosperous. Now, that's another question which I'd say, which person in the world doesn't want to be prosperous? You could gather a crowd of 10 million people and say, how many of you want to be prosperous? They'll all raise their hands. How many of you want to be poor? Nobody raises their hands.

So what does that prove? Does it prove they're all spiritually minded? Far from it. Jesus didn't come to make us prosperous. He came to save us from sin.

The angel did not tell Joseph, you shall call his name Jesus because he's going to make people rich. No, he said he's going to save people from their sins. Now, do you know the difference between being saved and being forgiven? There is a lot of difference.

And the illustration I use most commonly to describe that difference is, if my little boy, say, two, three years, five years old or so, was playing outside the gate of my house, and I told him, be careful, they're digging a big ditch on the road. Don't go anywhere near it. And like most little boys, he disobeys out of curiosity and goes near that 10 foot ditch and falls into it.

And from that pit, which they're digging on the road, he calls out to me and says, daddy, daddy, and I come running and say, what happened, son? He says, well, dad, I'm sorry. I disobeyed you. Please forgive me.

And I say, okay, son, you're forgiven. Goodbye. Have I forgiven him? Yes.

Have I saved him? No. Do you understand the difference between being saved and being forgiven? A lot of Christians are forgiven, but they're not saved. They're still in the same pit that they were in before they were forgiven.

The same sins that have defeated them for 20 years are still defeating them today. What are they saved from? Hell, perhaps, but certainly not from sin. See, this is a sad thing that the Lord wants us to live up here.

We're living way down here. We're not accomplishing or experiencing all that God wants us to. Jesus came, gave his life, died, rose again, not to leave us in our defeated condition, but to save us from it.

Cleansing from sin only deals with the problem of the past. There's another problem we have in the future, and that's our nature that keeps producing sin. If the Lord can't deal with that, I'd say it's not much of a

salvation.

I heard a story of a lunatic asylum where they had all these mentally ill patients, and one of the very simple tests they used to find out whether people had come back to their senses or not, whether they were fit for being released, was this. They would send them into a room, a small little room, with a mop and a bucket. And in that room, the tap was open.

And they would ask them to mop the floor dry. And if they tried to mop the floor dry without closing the tap, you'd know they are not yet fit to leave that asylum. Because they'd never finish.

You know that. It's endless. Now that's what a lot of Christians are seeking to do with the blood of Christ.

The tap is open of our sinful nature that keeps on pouring out sin day after day. But we say, thank God I've got a mop and a bucket, that every time sin comes forth, it can be mopped out. And the blood of Christ is like a mop.

What's going to happen about that tap? Is Jesus going to do something about that? Or is the gospel, here's a mop. Is that all there is in the gospel? No. That's what the devil wants us to believe.

Because that's how the name of Christ is dishonored by the behavior of Christians all around the world. It doesn't matter what they profess. If they lose their temper and lust and yell at each other at home, just like all the unbelievers around them, the name of Christ is dishonored.

No matter what we preach as a gospel. We can say that Christ died for our sins and our sins are all forgiven. But I have to tell my unbelieving neighbor, well of course I still yell at my wife like you do, because Christ can't save me from that, I'm sorry.

But he forgives our sin. It's a pathetic gospel. It's a very poor testimony.

It's very, very sad. And I believe that that is where the Bible says about the God of the world blinding the eyes of those who don't believe. What does he blind their eyes to? He blinds their eyes to as much of the gospel as possible.

The first thing he tries to blind people to is the fact that their sins can be totally forgiven if they repent and believe in Christ. If he doesn't succeed there, and like many of us we've come to faith that Christ can forgive our sins, then the next thing he tries to blind us to is the fact that there's something more in the gospel and that we can be saved from the power of sin. See when the Bible speaks about salvation, it's salvation in three tenses.

You know in grammar we studied three tenses? Past, present and future. Well salvation has got three tenses. Past, from the penalty of sin.

Present, from the power of sin. And future, when Christ comes again, from the very presence of sin. So it's the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and the presence of sin.

To be saved from the penalty of sin is over for us. We've accepted Christ and we're finished with the penalty of sin because he took our penalty, our punishment on the cross. But to be saved from the power of sin is something we are to experience every day.

To be saved from our anger, to be saved from bitterness, to be saved from rude speech, to be saved from impatience and jealousy, strife, greed, miserliness, stinginess, and many many impurity, unloving attitudes, pride, many things like this. To be saved from it is something we are to experience constantly and we never on this earth get fully saved from it because to be fully saved is to be like Christ and none of us have become like Christ and even the apostle Paul never became like Christ by the end of his life. It's like a mountain we keep climbing but we don't have to stay at the base level all our life to be like Christ is like say a 30,000 foot mountain like Mount Everest.

When we are born again we are at the foot of the mountain. To be like Christ is way up there but God's will is that we progressively become more and more like him before we leave this earth so that as people see us they see a progress in us. Paul told Timothy, let your progress be evident to everybody.

That's a lovely verse in 1 Timothy 4 towards the end of that chapter. Let your progress be evident to everyone. Progress in what? Maybe we should look at that verse before coming back to Philippians 2. 1 Timothy 4 and verse 15.

There are a number of things he speaks about. He speaks about being an example in verse 12. In speech, conduct, love, faith, purity.

He says, Timothy you are a young man but don't let anyone despise you for your youthfulness. Verse 12, but be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. And in verse 15 he says, take pains with these things.

Be absorbed in them. You know what it means to be absorbed in something? I mean the best example I can think of is people who are crazy about sport, watching a television sports program. Absorbed, you cannot distract them.

And to be absorbed with the things that are mentioned here, that means the devil can't distract you, the world can't distract you, you are determined to be Christ-like. And then it says, so that your progress may be evident to everybody. So even if Timothy was a leader of a church, his spiritual progress had to become evident to the people in his church.

He was a good man to start with. But people had to see that this good man was becoming better and better as time went on. Not just that he remained a good man.

That is God's will for every one of us. That is being saved from the power of sin, day by day. That we become more gracious and more merciful to others and more Christ-like and less irritable and more understanding, more compassionate, less judgmental of others, etc., etc., etc.

Exactly like Jesus was. More concerned with the spread of God's kingdom than with making money, for example. When a Christian is more concerned with making money than the spread of God's kingdom, we'd say, what's the difference between him and an unbeliever? An unbeliever is also more concerned about making money than the spread of God's kingdom.

How can you say that such a man is saved from sin? If he is not saved in this area. So we turn to Philippians chapter 2, which I was referring to. Verse 5 says, have this attitude in yourself, which is also in Christ Jesus.

Now you could take just that one verse and spend your whole life just meditating on that one verse. That's enough for salvation. You don't need any other verse in the whole Bible, once you're saved.

Have this attitude in you, which was in Christ Jesus. That means, look at other people the way Christ looked at them. Look at material things the way Christ looked at them.

Look at the things which the world considers big, the way Christ looked at them. Look at the way you use your time, and see whether that's the way Christ would use his time. And we could apply it to so many areas.

Look at your enemies, the way Christ would look at his enemies. Have this attitude in yourself, which was in Christ Jesus. When things don't go according to your well laid out plans, well, how should you react to those difficult circumstances? React in the way Jesus would.

So with that one verse, have this attitude in yourself, which was in Christ Jesus. You could go all through life, every day. That one verse is enough to meditate on from morning till night, every day.

And what was the attitude that Jesus had? What is true spirituality? The attitude that was in the Pharisees was different from the attitude in Christ. And very often, as I said earlier, people confuse spirituality with being religious. And we need to see what Jesus had, which the Pharisees did not have.

Was it reading the Bible? No. Because the Pharisees read the Bible too, just like Jesus. They knew the law like he knew the law.

They prayed like he prayed. They fasted and he fasted. They did missionary work, he did missionary work.

So all these things were not the areas in which Jesus stood out as distinctive, distinct from the Pharisees. But if you were to think of one area where Jesus stood out as distinct from the Pharisees, it was this, that he never sought his own in anything. He always sought the glory of his Father.

Every decision of his was determined by not what will I get out of this, but what will God get out of it. Now you look at the decisions which you take in your life, when you choose to go somewhere, when you choose to take up a job, when you move to a new location, and you find very often your decisions are not determined by what will God get out of it, but what you will get out of it. That's how the children of Adam live.

Every crooked businessman in the world lives by that principle. What's that? Not what will God get out of this, but what will I get out of it. Every child of Adam lives by that principle.

And when a person claims to be a Christian, and lives by the same principle that every crooked businessman in the world lives by, which is what will I get out of it, he's just religious. He's not spiritual at all. And yet, he can imagine that he's spiritual because there's no one who will preach to him and expose the religious veneer on his life which makes him think he's spiritual.

He's fooling himself and the devil has fooled him, and there's nobody to strip off that religious veneer and show him that he's just as self-centered as any unconverted godless man in the world. That's what Jesus did in the synagogues, and when he did that, the Pharisees got mad and wanted to kill him. And preachers don't want to get killed, so they don't speak on that subject.

You know, it's not a popular thing to be a prophet. It's much easier to be an evangelist or even a teacher, you know. But a prophet who goes around... A prophet is more than an evangelist or a teacher.

He goes around exposing sin. But he exposes it with a good reason. I mean, he's like a doctor who gives you an accurate diagnosis of your cancer.

He doesn't just pat you on your back and say everything's okay with you and sends you home to die. He doesn't do that. He tells you the truth about yourself, even if it's painful, because he says there's a cure for it, a total cure for it.

That's why he is not afraid to proclaim an accurate diagnosis of your condition. You know, Paul, for example, he said something here about some of his co-workers. Now, what would you think of being one of Paul's co-workers? I mean, Paul was very selective about whom he took on his team.

You know, once he refused to take a young man called John Mark onto his team. On their second trip, we read in Acts chapter 15, the end of chapter 15. And he said, I don't want that fellow.

I mean, he's a fine Christian, he's filled with the Holy Spirit and all, but I don't want him. Because the fellow is not willing to live a tough life. I took him with me last time, and he just dropped out when the going got tough.

We don't want such a person. But he chose Timothy. Now, if you were selected by Paul, if you were living in the first century, and you were selected by Paul to be on his team, what would you think? I would think it is a tremendous honor to be selected by Paul to be on his team.

Boy, imagine, I'd go around letting people know that I'm actually on Paul's team. I'm not just an ordinary believer. I'm one of Paul's co-workers.

But, Paul was a very shrewd man. You know, even among his co-workers, who were already such good people, Paul says, I'm not fooled. He says, most of my co-workers seek their own.

Can you believe that? Now read, listen to this. Paul says, verse 19 of chapter 2, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly. See, Paul was looking around his co-workers.

I'm not talking about all his co-workers, but those who were with him at that time. I don't know how many of them were with him. He was in a jail when he wrote this.

And there were a few people who were in touch with him. And he said, he wanted to send somebody to Philippi to encourage the church in Philippi. Because he himself was in jail.

So he says, I hope to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I may be encouraged when I learn of your spiritual condition. And listen to this. I don't have anybody else of a kindred spirit, that means who's got the same spirit as me, who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

I mean, just like a lot of preachers today, they are more concerned with what's in your wallet, and how much they can get out of it, or your bank account, than your salvation. And Paul says, a lot of my co-workers are not really interested in your welfare, as much as perhaps what they can get out of you. Maybe money, maybe honor, maybe... I mean, preachers preach for all types of reasons.

They preach for honor, they preach for money, they preach for a name, to get a reputation, they preach because that's their profession, they have to do it, just like you got to go to work everyday, they have to do something because that's their job, they are paid for it, and there are many many reasons. But to be genuinely concerned for the welfare of the people, who are being preached to, Paul says, Timothy is about the only one. Isn't that sad? And listen to this, what about all the others? They all seek after their own interests, not the interests of Christ Jesus.

Now, if that verse was written about all the godless unbelievers in the world, we can understand it. You know, if you look at all the godless, unconverted people in the world, and say, they all seek after their own interests, and not the interests of Christ Jesus, we say, yeah, right. But Paul's not talking about the godless people in the world, he's talking about his co-workers.

He's not even talking about believers, he's talking about believers who came to such a level, as to be selected to be on his team. He says, even among them. He says, I'm not fooled.

Yeah, they're good people, they are cleansed in the blood, they speak in tongues, they are filled with the spirit, they praise the Lord, they worship the Lord, but they seek their own. And I think if the apostle Paul came into a lot of Christian groups today, he'd say, yeah, they have all these experiences, but they still seek their own. That's really sad.

And not just 50% of them, he says, they all seek their own, except Timothy. He is different. See, Paul was a very shrewd assessor of men, just like Jesus.

And he saw that a lot of people are hanging around with me, are hanging around with me for their own benefit. To get some reputation, to get a fame, to get gain, like I said, you know, to boast that I'm on Paul's team, or something like that, to get honor, or to get money. We read later on of a man called Demas, who was on Paul's team, who forsook him.

I don't know why he forsook him, but Paul says he forsook me, loving this present world. Maybe he realized that we can't make much money working with Paul, so I better launch out on my own, and start my own Demas Evangelistic Ministries, or something like that, so that I can make some money. This going around with Paul, I don't seem to be able to make.

We're only saving souls, we're not making any money. So he decided to launch out on his own. But Paul saw through him, long before he launched out on his own, and he said, these fellows are all seeking their own.

You know, you couldn't survive with Paul, unless you were totally committed for the glory of God. He'd see through you in no time at all. Now the reason why a lot of Christians survive in a lot of churches today, is because either their leaders don't have discernment to see through them, or their leaders don't have the guts and the courage to expose them, and show them where they stand.

That's the tragedy. We have churches today, where we have elders of the churches, who are just seeking their own. Godless.

I said, what type of church is that? I mean, where even the leaders are seeking their own. Forget the ordinary people. You know, I heard of a French atheist, who lived over 200 years ago, in France.

His name was Voltaire. He was a philosopher, atheist, infidel, didn't believe in God. But he was a very shrewd observer of people.

He lived in the 18th century. And he looked around at all the Christian denominations, Catholic and Protestant, in his time, in Europe. And he made a very shrewd observation.

He said, all these Christians, they have a lot of different doctrines in their different denominations. But when it comes to money, they all have the same religion. They all love money.

It didn't matter, whether they were Catholic or Protestant, or whatever it was in that time. Is that true? Forget about people in the 18th century. We need to ask ourselves.

If people knew us thoroughly, if they knew exactly how we earn our money, how we spend our money, what we live for, what are our thoughts concerning money, would they say that Voltaire was right? That we argue about baptism, and form of baptism, and form of church government, and gifts of the spirit, but when it comes to money, we're all the same. That's because the root of sin has never been dealt with. You know the Pharisees, it says about the Pharisees in Luke chapter 16, it's very interesting.

With all their fasting, and prayer, and religious activity, and missionary activity, and everything else, it says in Luke chapter 16, in verse, that when Jesus said these words, in verse 13, no servant can serve two masters. And the two masters are not God and Satan. Now if you were to ask the average Christian who are the two masters in the world, they'll immediately say God and Satan.

And Jesus said, no, the two masters are God and money. Did you know that? Did you know that mammon means money and material things. That means houses, cars, property of any type.

That's, mammon is one word for that, and there are only two masters in the world. And you serve one or the other. You can't serve both.

Now everybody knows you can't serve God and the devil at the same time. I mean, nobody has any doubt about that. But I think there are lots of believers who think you can serve God and money at the same time.

And Jesus said, no, it's not possible. You got to make a choice sometime in your life, whether you're going to serve God or you're going to serve money. A religious person is a person who is convinced that he can serve God and money.

And he serves God and money. Now a spiritual man is not like that. A spiritual man serves only God.

He seeks the kingdom of God first and his righteousness. And you say, well, what about his material needs? They are added to him. God takes care of his material needs as he spends his life seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness first.

That's not the way full-time Christian workers should live, but the way every Christian should live. That's not a standard for apostles and prophets. That's a standard for every newly born-again believer as well.

That's the standard that Jesus taught. And it says in the next verse, the Pharisees who were lovers of money listened to all this and scoffed at him. So you see, the Pharisees with all their praying and fasting and religious activity were great lovers of money.

Just like a lot of Christians today. They all seek after their own interests. See, what is the problem with the race of Adam? It says that John the Baptist came with the message that Jesus has come to lay the axe to the root of the tree.

The tree is what's producing sin in our life. All types of sin. Some ugly sins, some not so ugly, but sin nevertheless.

And Jesus came to deal with the root of it. He didn't come to just chop off the fruit after it appeared. He came to deal with the root.

You know, that's the difference between law and grace. Law could deal with the sin only after the fruit came out. A man committed a murder, the law would come down and clamp down, punish him.

He would commit adultery, the law would punish him. He would steal, the law would punish him. It's like having a pair of scissors where when the fruit comes out, you cut it off.

And somewhere else the fruit comes out, you cut it off. But, you know, with our nature, this fruit comes out so fast that we gotta just be running around with our pair of scissors all the time so that we keep a good testimony before others. But Jesus came and said, I'm not gonna do something better.

I'm gonna lay the axe to the root of this tree and uproot it completely so that this problem is solved permanently and I'm gonna plant another tree here. That's what we spoke of earlier this morning. The divine nature.

The nature of Adam can never be repaired or rectified or modified and made better. It's corrupt. So corrupt that the only thing you can do with it is uproot it completely.

That's why God condemned it on the cross. He crucified, not only Jesus, He crucified our old nature, there. That's what the Bible says in Romans 6. So that's what Jesus did.

Lay the axe to the root of the tree. What is the root of the tree? The root of the tree is not adultery, it's not murder, it's not theft. It is seeking our own.

A man commits murder because he's seeking his own. A man commits adultery because he's seeking his own. A man steals because he's seeking his own.

And do you know Jesus spoke about a lot of sins which are not even mentioned in the Ten Commandments. Did you know that? What did Jesus speak against the most? Hypocrisy. It's not even mentioned in the Ten Commandments.

He spoke against pride. That's not mentioned in the Ten Commandments. He spoke against selfishness.

It's not mentioned in the Ten Commandments. He spoke about a lack of concern for the needs of others. Not mentioned in the Ten Commandments.

He spoke about unbelief. Not mentioned in the Ten Commandments. So sin is a lot more than just the Ten Commandments.

I mean, the Ten Commandments are things which even the worldly people consider as sin. But Jesus spoke about a lot of other things which worldly people don't consider as sin at all. I mean, how many

people in the world think that being a hypocrite is a sin? To pretend to be a little holy.

How many people think that's a sin? How many people think pride is a sin? Or unbelief is a sin? Or seeking your own is a sin? Such things are not counted as sin by people in the world. And that's because their conscience is so insensitive. They haven't seen Christ.

They've seen the law. And when a person has not seen Jesus and the way Jesus lived, he's only going to be a religious person all his life. Even if he says he's born again.

Even if he says he's baptized in the Holy Spirit. We have to see Jesus. What was it that motivated Jesus in his life? The glory of the Father.

He never sought his own interests. We could say the race of Adam, if we were to use an illustration, is like this. Myself sits at the center of my life.

Everything in my life revolves. I'm talking about how a child of Adam thinks and acts. Everything in my life revolves around how will that affect me? Will I get some benefit from it? You see, I'm on the throne.

Self is on the throne. And my wife has to revolve around me in orbit, serving me. My children have to revolve around me in orbit, making sure they don't irritate me when I have things to do.

And my neighbors have to revolve in orbit around me, never making life inconvenient for me in any way. My fellow members in the church have to revolve around me. The pastor has to revolve around me.

And one day I become a Christian and God has to revolve around me as well. He has to serve me. He's just come into my orbit now.

So the only difference between the children of Adam and a lot of Christians is the Christians have got God also in their orbit to serve their needs, to make them prosperous, to bless them, to heal them. And there are preachers who will tell them, come to Jesus and he'll come into your orbit and bless you and serve you and make you rich. And everybody raises their hands.

Do you want God in your orbit? Yeah, I sure do. Who's at the center? Who doesn't want God in his orbit? I mean, that's the best person to get into your orbit if he's willing to come. But the sad news is God will not come into anybody's orbit.

Jesus did not come to revolve around us and serve us like that. Religious people are like that. They pray for their own gain.

They fast to get some benefit. They preach to get honor. They'll sing solos in the meetings, not for the glory of God, but just to let everybody know how well they can sing.

You know, there's a lot of sin in our holy activities. Have you read that expression in the Old Testament? If you haven't, let me show it to you in Exodus chapter 28. In Exodus chapter 28 we read about the turban that Aaron the high priest had to wear.

And everything in the Old Testament was a symbol or a picture of the New Testament. Aaron was a picture of Christ who, you know, he took the blood of the animal into the most holy place, just like Jesus has entered the most holy place to get forgiveness of sins for us through his blood. So Aaron is a picture of Christ.

And one of the things that Aaron had to wear, we read in Exodus 28 verse 36, was a plate of pure gold with this engraving on it, Holy to the Lord. And it has to be fastened on his turban. And listen to this verse, verse 38, It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate.

What is the iniquity of the holy things? Now the iniquity of the unholy things we can all understand. Iniquity like anger, bitterness, pride, jealousy, and so many things like that. What's the iniquity of the holy things? Is preaching a holy thing? Yes.

But if I preach to make money, or I preach for honor, or I preach to get a reputation, there's iniquity in preaching. Is praying a holy thing? Yes. But if I pray in public because I want to impress everybody with what a wonderful prayer I offer to God, there's iniquity in that prayer.

You know there's a lot of iniquity in the church? What about in singing? All to Jesus I surrender. Really? All my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold. I say Christians tell more lies to God on Sunday than on any other day of the week.

In their songs. They say such a lot of lies. I mean the rest of the week they're not singing those songs, so at least they're not telling any lies.

But when they say take my life and let it be, and take my silver and my gold, and take my lips and let me sing always only for my king, that means I'm never supposed to gossip anymore. I'm never supposed to do anything, say anything dishonoring to the Lord. It's all lies.

It's a pack of lies which they don't intend to keep even Sunday afternoon. Leave alone the rest of the week. Iniquity in the holy things.

This is the mark of religious people. There is no connection between their Christianity and their daily life and behavior. And they come and praise the Lord on Sunday morning and can yell at somebody in anger on Sunday evening.

And they don't see any inconsistency in that. God is just one more person in their orbit. You know, someone to go to when I have a problem.

He's there revolving around me to be called upon like the genie in Aladdin's lamp, you know. God, I want this. Then some other time I want this.

But God isn't that. God is almighty ruler of heaven and earth and he'll never come into anybody's orbit. And true Christianity, please listen carefully, is for me to get out of my throne and to put God there.

And for me to get into orbit around God, around Jesus where I'm no longer thinking what can I get from God in my life. But rather, what can God get out of me in the one earthly life I have. I want to ask you honestly, how is your thinking as a Christian? Is your mind like, what can I get out of God? What, I mean, what can a preacher tell me about? How to get something out of God? Or is your thinking, what can God get out of you? You go to the average Christian bookshop and see the type of books being sold there.

Most of the most popular books in Christian bookshops today are books on how you can get something out of God. Who's in orbit then? And who's in the center? It's so clear. And they call that faith.

That's not faith at all. That's just downright selfishness. How you can get this from God? How to get things from God? This heavenly genie who comes out of the lamp to answer your prayers.

It's a deception. It's a lie of the devil. That's not God.

That's another Jesus who's willing to revolve around you in orbit and bless you and prosper you and do 101 things for you and at your service all the time. Whereas the true Jesus, he demanded total obedience. He said, you got to love me more than father, mother, brother, sister, wife, job, possessions, everything.

Otherwise you cannot be my disciple. You won't find many books on that subject in the average Christian bookshop. I tell you that if you don't believe me, go and check it out.

I've done it. I haven't done it here, but I've done it in India. I've done it in other countries.

And I say everywhere the most popular books on the market show me the level of today's Christians. And the most popular books on the market are those which teach you how you can get things from God. How you can get a better car and a better house and a better job and a better this.

Because God is in your orbit. And there are hundreds of thousands of people who buy those books and go to those meetings, but they're living in a deception. One day they'll wake up when Christ comes again and discover that the one they worship was not the Jesus Christ of the Bible, but some other Christ, some other Jesus.

True Christianity is where self is crucified and Christ sits on the throne. You know, we could put it like this. In our life, in our heart, we got a cross and a throne.

And either self is sitting on the throne and Christ is crucified or self is crucified and Christ is on the throne. And you know which is true in your life. But that determines whether you're a religious person or a spiritual person.

A spiritual person is not just one who prays. He prays for the glory of God. And there's a world of difference between praying and praying for the glory of God.

A spiritual person is not just one who preaches. He preaches for the glory of God. He does everything for the glory of God.

He doesn't just do good things. He does things for the glory of God. The motive is what matters.

It's not what you do. It's the motive with which you do it that gives value to that action of yours. Men may appreciate an action.

You give \$100,000 for Christian work. People are impressed by that. And God says, well I want to see what's the motive.

And I want to see how much you've kept back for yourself. I'm not impressed, He says, by a lot of things that impress men. When Christ is in the center of our life and I get into orbit, then I become a spiritual person and then my thought pattern is different.

Now I'm no longer thinking of how I can get a better car or a better house or a better this or a better that from God. Now I'm thinking, how can God get the most out of me? How can He get the maximum from my

one earthly life? How can I use the money I've earned for the maximum for the glory of God? And how can I can, how can I use my time in the best way for the glory of God? That's the difference between those who seek their own interests and those who seek the interests of Christ Jesus. Now we understand what Paul says in Philippians chapter 2, that verse we read.

Except Timothy, all the others are seeking their own interests. That doesn't mean they were living in adultery or telling lies or stealing. No, I think they were decent people, otherwise they'd never have been on Paul's team.

They were upright people, but with all their uprightness, they were seeking their own interests. It was I, me and my family in the center. And everything that they, every decision they took was determined by I, me and my family.

How does this affect I, me and my family? And when a Christian lives like that, he's just plain religious. He's not spiritual. And this is how the devil is fooling people left, right and center across the world.

Making them think that they're spiritual. They're not. And that's why they never come to the standard of life the New Testament speaks about.

The New Testament speaks about giving thanks for everything at all times, about rejoicing the Lord always, being anxious for nothing, overcoming sin, keeping the devil under our feet. Do you think, have you met a lot of Christians who live like that? No. I haven't.

I meet a lot of Christians who are grumbling and complaining about something or the other most of the time. Who can't get along with other believers. Who are afraid of the devil.

So completely different from the type of Christians described in the New Testament. And the reason is, because self is in the center. And as long as self is in the center, we'll never come to the type of life described in the New Testament.

I have to come to the Lord sometime in my life and say, Lord, I'm willing to get self out of the center and out of the throne, and I want Jesus Christ to be Lord of my life. I want Jesus Christ to come to the center of my life. That's the meaning of true repentance.

Many, many, many people who have come to our church in Bangalore, in India have told us after sitting in our church for a number of years, Brother Zach, I never understood what repentance was till I came here. I never understood what sin was till I came here. I thought sin was gambling and drinking and going to the movies and telling lies and cheating and smoking and drinking and I'd given up all that.

It's only when I came here, I discovered that sin is being centered in yourself and seeking your own. And that holiness was not just reading the Bible and praying and fasting. Holiness was seeking the glory of God in everything in life.

Have you understood that? A lot of Christians haven't. So what is repentance? Repentance is like the military command about turn. Turn about from seeking your own and turn now and seek the glory of God.

And that type of repentance is not preached. You don't get the quality of Christians that you read of in the New Testament. You don't get people like the apostles.

And why isn't that type of Christianity preached? Because most preachers want to be popular. They want money. They want money.

You won't make money preaching this type of message. You won't get a lot of following. In fact, your following will thin down.

And that's why the devil knows that most preachers seek their own. So he's got them to preach this popular message of God being in the orbit and serving you, which is a total lie. It's never taught in the New Testament.

You're living in an imaginary world if you think God has come to do all that for you. Jesus said, seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness. Put Him first in your life and the other things will be added to you.

We don't spend our life seeking the other things. That is a truly spiritual man. And don't think that such a man is going to be a you know find his life a burden.

In fact, life is going to be very exciting for such a person. I found ever since I decided to make God the center of my life and to put self out of the way, my life has been very exciting. There's no discouraging in my life.

And yet when I look at my former Christian life, it was frequent periods of depression and discouragement. That's how it is when God's not in the center of your life. You know, it's impossible to be discouraged and to be condemned and to be miserable and complain and grumble when God is in the center of your life.

It is impossible. It's when self is in the center of our life that we have all these complaints against people. We get discouraged frequently.

We get depressed. We're anxious. We're fearful.

And we have a lot of sicknesses in our body too. It's because God's not in the center. So what I'm inviting you to this evening is to make God the center of your life.

Let's pray. Well, this day we've heard a number of things and I trust we've understood a little bit of the difference between being religious and being spiritual. And God desires to change every one of us.

If you will acknowledge that you cannot change yourself, He only asks you to be willing. If you're willing, He'll do the surgery. He'll do that spiritual surgery and He'll do the transformation.

But He won't do it if you're not willing. Just like when you go in for an operation in a hospital, you've got to sign a certificate saying you're willing. The Lord waits for you to sign your life over and say, Lord, I'm willing to get self out of the center of my life.

I want Jesus Christ to be in the center of my life, to be Lord of my life. Heavenly Father, we pray that you will apply the truths we've heard this day in our life that our lives will be changed, can be more effective for you in the days to come. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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