

Religiosity or Spirituality - Life and Laws

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the difference between religiosity and spirituality, and living by the prompting of the Holy Spirit rather than by rules and regulations.

Duration: 1:00:36

Scripture: Genesis 3:24, Mark 7:3-13, 2 Corinthians 4:10-11, Galatians 2:20

Topics: "Religiosity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the difference between religious and spiritual people. He uses the analogy of a pig on a leash to illustrate how religious people rely on rules and regulations (symbolized by the ten commandments) to keep themselves clean. However, in the New Covenant, God seeks to put His nature within believers, symbolized by the tree of life, so that they can naturally avoid sin and do what is right. The speaker emphasizes that true spirituality is not about following external rules, but about having a transformed heart that loves righteousness and hates sin.

Transcript

We can be religious and still live for ourselves, but you can't be spiritual and live for yourself. That's impossible. And that's why man prefers to be religious rather than to be spiritual.

See, the significance of a lamb being slain, the blood being shed, though they didn't understand it fully in the Old Testament, today we know Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God that was slain for the sins of the world and that it's only through His blood that there's any forgiveness, that all our good works are like filthy rags and salvation is free through the blood of Jesus Christ. But there is one more truth that's mentioned in Scripture that when Christ died, we died with Him. This is a mystery to many people.

Paul says, I'm crucified with Christ. That means when God allowed Jesus to be crucified, it says in Romans 8.3, He condemned sin in the flesh. That's the word used in Romans 8.3. God condemned sin in the flesh when Jesus died on the cross.

But that sin was our sin. He was condemning not only our sin, but He was also condemning our self-life on the cross. And religious people have no interest in understanding that.

And have no understanding of it either. Because they have no interest in it. See, a religious person is basically someone who does not want to give up living for himself.

But still wants fellowship with God. And still wants all the benefits of Christianity without giving up living for oneself. Whereas true spirituality involves giving up one's self-life.

Now in Mark chapter 7, we read about this conflict that Jesus had with the Pharisees over the ritual of washing their hands. It says, the Pharisees, they saw, verse 2, Mark 7.2, some of Jesus' disciples eating bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. And the Pharisees, all the Jews, do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders.

Now, it's not just a question of getting rid of the dirt. The Pharisees were not asking why Jesus' disciples were not hygienic. That was not the question here.

But for them, this was a religious ritual, this washing of the hands, you know. All the way down from the elbow, downwards they had to wash. And this was a whole ritual before they ate.

And it was not commanded in the Old Testament. What the Pharisees did was, they used to take commands in the Old Testament and amplify them. And make them much bigger than what they were supposed to be.

And that's what religious people tend to do. And they make a whole lot of rules and regulations which don't touch your self-life. That's the important point to notice.

It's just questions like washing your hands and what distance can we walk on a Sabbath day. All types of religious questions which don't touch the root cause of man's problem, which is his self-life. And Jesus said, it's not only that.

It says here they had all types of other things which they tend to observe. Verse 4, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots. These are not just for hygienic purposes but for religious, as a religious ritual.

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Jesus, why don't your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders? They eat their bread with impure hands. And Jesus said, you neglect verse 8, the commandment of God to hold to your tradition. Religious people tend to follow tradition.

A spiritual man tends to follow God's word. And he said, you set aside the commandment of God, verse 9, to keep your tradition. And you cancel the word of God, verse 3, by keeping your tradition.

So, in all those verses, verse 8, 9 and 13, Jesus was putting the word of God against the tradition of man. And whenever we find that a tradition, maybe which our church has practiced for centuries, or which we cherish for some reason without even knowing what it stands for, when that becomes more important than God's word, we are walking down the path of religion. And that's the thing that Jesus was in conflict with throughout his life.

He taught people that man must live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. God's word is more important. But they were more interested in keeping their tradition.

There was this constant conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, because they insisted on tradition and Jesus insisted on God's word. It was a conflict of God's word and tradition. Now, if you look around at Christendom today, it is exactly the same.

The way the Jewish religion developed over 1500 years from the time of Moses, is exactly the way Christendom has developed over 2000 years from the time of Christ. That tradition has come to have importance more than the word of God. And if you were to examine your life and see why you do so many things in your Christianity, you may discover that certain things are traditions.

That's the way our fathers did it. That's the way our grandfathers did it. That's the way it's been done for generations.

But that's not the important thing. The important thing is, does God's word teach it? If God's word does not teach that, however many centuries it's been practiced, it has no value before God. So that's what the Lord was trying to teach them.

Like I said earlier, man is always looking for some substitute to... Tradition becomes like a substitute for that which God is really asking for. You know, in the Old Testament, when they offered a burnt offering to God, a man would come and lay his hands on the ox, and then the priest would kill it. He was identifying himself with that animal.

And there was symbolism there which they didn't even understand then. As I said earlier, it was not just that somebody else is going to die for my sin. But more than that, in the cross of Christ, let me repeat what I said earlier, it was not just my sin that was condemned, but this entire self-life that I have inherited from Adam.

If you don't see that as condemned on the cross by God, I want to say, my brothers and sisters, you may get to heaven because your sins are forgiven. But you'll never live the life on earth that God wanted you to live. You know, a lot of Christians like that.

When they die, okay, they're going to go to heaven. But because their sins were forgiven, they trusted Christ. But they never lived on earth the way God wanted them to live.

Because though they saw their sins placed on Christ, they never saw their self-life was also put to death. As far as God was concerned, it was condemned when Jesus died on the cross. Paul saw it.

And that's why Paul trusted that on the cross of Christ, not only his sins were put on Christ, but he also says in Galatians 2.20, I have also been crucified with Christ, and I do not live any longer, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. That's Galatians 2.20. Or Romans 6 is a big expansion of that, where it says, Our old man was crucified with Christ.

In my experience, I've discovered that the vast majority of Christians have little to no understanding of Romans 6, of what it means for our self-life to be crucified. And no matter what experience you may have, even you can be filled with the Holy Spirit, baptize in the Holy Spirit, exercise the gifts of the Spirit, you can never be a spiritual man if you don't walk the way of the cross. So, and when we don't walk the way of the cross, the substitute we have is tradition.

We find a satisfaction in tradition. Tradition has become a substitute for the way of the cross. So when Abel offered a sacrifice, and the blood was shed, it was more than a picture of Christ being crucified.

It was also a picture of man being crucified with Christ. Every Old Testament sacrifice was that. You know, when a man laid his hands on the bull, he's saying, That's me.

And the bull was slain. Now, if we turn back to the Old Testament, and see the Genesis chapter 3, where when God drove man out of the garden, before that, let me mention this. There were these two trees.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. What, have you ever considered, what is wrong in knowing the difference between good and evil? Is anything wrong in that? Think for a moment. Don't we want our children as they grow up, to distinguish between good and evil? Which of us want our children to grow up without knowing what's good and what's evil? And that tree, which helped Adam and Eve to know the difference between good and evil.

What was wrong? To do evil is wrong. That we can understand. If the tree was a tree of doing evil, then we can understand.

Well, that's wrong. If you partake of that, you'll die. But if you do evil, it leads to spiritual death.

But how can the knowledge of good and evil lead to death? And yet the Lord told him, that if you eat of that tree, you will certainly die. And what's the message that comes through to us from that? The knowledge of good and evil, leads to spiritual death. How do we explain that? Why is it that God did not want Adam to eat of that tree? It's important for us to understand that.

You know, when we come to the New Testament, it says, by the law is the knowledge of good and evil. Why is it that the nation of Israel had a much higher moral standard than all the other nations around them? Because they had the law. And what did the law do? What did the Ten Commandments do? It taught Israel what was good and what was evil.

It told them that murder was bad. It told them that honoring your father and mother was good. It taught them that adultery was evil.

But keeping the Sabbath, to spend one day and seven in rest and in fellowship with God was good. It taught them that idolatry was wrong. Taking the Lord's name was wrong.

To acknowledge God alone as one's God was good. The law was basically telling Israel what was good and what was evil. Right? What did the law bring? Consistently the Bible says, the law brought, it never brought anyone to life.

It reformed them externally, but never brought them to partake of divine nature. It never changed their inner life. That's why we read in Hebrews that God abolished the law.

He abolished it because it never led people to life. Now that doesn't mean that God made a mistake. No.

He never makes a mistake. He gave man the law to teach man, you can never come to life this way. You can try all your life, but you'll never reach it.

God gave that to Israel for 1500 years to teach them one lesson. You'll never make it by keeping the law. And even though God gave that to Israel for 1500 years, even today, there are Christians who think that by imitating Christ, they can come to being spiritual.

That means you look at something that Jesus didn't, you try and do the same thing yourself. That's not God's way. The best way I could explain it is, as children of Adam, we could say our nature is similar to that of a pig.

A pig is basically dirty. And a pig's children, little piglets, you don't need to teach them to be dirty. They're just automatically dirty.

No mother pig teaches its little piglets, now you listen, you're a piglet, don't forget that. You gotta be dirty. It's just like you and I don't have to teach our children to tell lies.

Do you have to teach your children to tell lies? Do you have to teach your children to fight with each other? Do you have to teach your children to be selfish? Do you have to teach your children to hurt one another? None of us have to do it. That's exactly like a mother pig doesn't have to tell its piglets to be dirty. It's nature.

And throughout all generations, those little pigs that are born will always be like that. In every country in the world, every child is going to be the same. Selfish, whether they are baptized, christened as infants or not christened, it makes no difference.

They're just the same. Whichever religion they're born into, they're the same. The Christian child is not less selfish than the other.

And you know, we train our children when they're small, don't do this and do this, and we can restrain them by the law. What is the law? If you don't obey me, I'll punish you. If you do obey me, I'll give you some ice cream or some reward.

The principle of the law is reward and punishment. If you obey, you get a reward. If you don't obey, you're punished.

That is what leads people to become religious. Israel was a very religious nation. They were not spiritual.

They were religious. And religion leads to death. That's what God wanted to teach Israel for 1500 years.

Do you think any of those Israelites really became spiritual? They could not. They could live a very good life externally, but unless their heart was changed, you could not become spiritual. And I think there were people who rose above the law in Israel.

I think people like Moses and Elijah and things like that, who rose above the level of the law and could come into a life higher than the others in Israel. But the Pharisees, who just kept the law externally, they were just religious. And we see how Jesus' greatest conflict was with these religious people, who were keeping the law, which proves that the law brings death.

And that is the symbolism there in the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Knowledge of good and evil brings death. How then did God want Adam and Eve to remain without the knowledge of good and evil? No.

The difference was, He wanted them to go to the tree of life, which pictured the Holy Spirit. The tree of knowledge of good and evil pictured the law, showing you what's good and what's evil. The tree of life symbolized the Holy Spirit.

And God wanted Adam to live by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, telling you what's good and evil, rather than by the knowledge of good and evil resident in your mind. Now, that's how, even today, God wants us to live. For example, let's apply that to our generation.

See, this is the difference between a religious man and a spiritual man today. A religious man has got certain rules in his mind. I don't do this, and I do this, and I don't do this, and I'm okay.

A spiritual man lives by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. And that's why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit all the time. That's why one of the great promises in the New Testament is, He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

Now, you don't need the baptism in the Holy Spirit to go to heaven. For that, you only need the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse you from all sins. But you need the baptism in the Holy Spirit to live on this earth the way God wants you to live.

So, if our only aim in life is to go to heaven when we die, I say, brother, you don't need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Just believe in Jesus and let His blood cleanse you. You're okay.

But if your desire in life is more than that, say, Lord, after all that you did for me on the cross, I want to do something for you on this earth before I leave. Boy, then you better be filled with the Holy Spirit. There's no other way you can live for God.

He said, you... The power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, will come upon you and then you'll be my witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth. He didn't say the power of the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you'll go to heaven. No.

That's not meant for heaven. It's meant to be Christ's witnesses on this earth. So, only a person who has a passionate desire to be a witness for Christ will seek for the power of the Holy Spirit.

A person whose only desire is to go to heaven when he dies, he's not going to seek for the power of the Holy Spirit. He just wants to make sure his sins are cleansed in the blood of Christ. That's all.

And you find these two types of Christians today. And because living in a bad way would give us a bad testimony, we try to follow certain rules and end up being religious people. The Holy Spirit imparts to us God's own nature.

And religious people and spiritual people can do the same thing. But it will be in a completely different way. Let me illustrate this to you.

Supposing I were to... Supposing I had a pig and I want to keep this... I want to take this pig on a long one mile journey and come out of the end of it through a dirty path. And I want to keep that pig clean at the end of this one mile walk. It will be impossible to do it unless I keep that pig on a leash.

If I tie that pig with ten chains, the Ten Commandments, and I walk, and every time it's attracted this way, I pull one chain, or it's attracted the other way, I pull a chain, I will succeed with great effort at the end of that one mile to keep that pig absolutely clean. Because I've got these chains and it will be a clean pig at the end of a one mile walk. That's what the law did.

It kept people externally pure. And at the end of it, the pig came glory, I'm a clean pig. I'm not dirty.

And it's true, it's not dirty. But it's nature hasn't changed one bit. Now, along that same path, if I were to take a cat for a walk, I wouldn't need any chains at all.

Not even one. It wouldn't go this side, it wouldn't go that side, it wouldn't jump into the dirty water because it doesn't want to be dirty. What is the difference between the clean pig and the clean cat at the end of that one mile walk? One is nature, and the other is the restraints of the law.

That is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. What the law did, held you with various rules and regulations and prevented you from getting dirty.

God abolished that and said in the New Covenant, I'm going to put my nature within you. And that nature will make you avoid what's evil and do what's right. That is symbolized in the Tree of Life.

For example, to apply that to some situation today, what type of television programs are we permitted to watch as Christians? Beg your pardon? You know, we could say, well, if you're watching the news or some sport and all, okay, they're not dirty. But people could make a list of these are good programs, those are not so good. It's like a list of good and evil.

And you can follow that and die, spiritually, because the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil brings that. It's just an example. Whereas, here's another way to know what type of television programs to watch.

And that is to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit when you're watching. And the Spirit says, no, you don't have a list. You're filled with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit says, that's not for you.

And you turn away. That's the result of nature. This is the result of rules and regulations and you'll have to keep modifying it because new programs come up which are not in this list.

So when a new program comes up which is not in this list, what do you do? You've got to go back to the man who made the list and if it's your pastor or somebody else and say, in which category does this program come? But you don't need a list when you have the Holy Spirit. I was once ministering God's Word in a part of India where I discovered that all the Christians there, they were born again Christians but they'd smoke cigarettes. And I always thought born again Christians don't smoke cigarettes.

But here they did. And I don't blame them. I blame their teachers.

I mean if you were to go to a slum and you find a child who cannot read and write, would you blame him or would you blame his parents? So I say in the same way if you see a bunch of people who are supposed to be Christians and they smoke cigarettes, I say I don't blame them. I blame their teachers. The people who have gone and preached to them.

So I said, well, a lot of other preachers have come here and not taught them this. I'm going to do it. But they were such sincere people.

They were such sincere good people that I didn't want to make them feel condemned. So I said, I'm going to teach you today how a Christian should smoke a cigarette. So I said, this is the way we should do it.

I said, haven't you noticed? I said, I've noticed this all over India that even if I'm standing at a bus stand with a stranger and when that man, we're just talking together, I don't even know him. But when he pulls out his cigarette packet to smoke a cigarette, he'll always offer it to me. I mean that's the standard practice.

We say, would you like to have a cigarette? I say, no thank you, that's fine. So I said, now that's the way you should smoke a cigarette. You want the Lord to be always with you, right? So when you take out your pack, you offer one to Jesus and say, Lord, would you like to have a cigarette? And if the Lord says, yes, I think I'll have one too, then it's alright for you to do it.

But if the Lord says no, then you shouldn't be smoking either. And I said, that's not just for smoking cigarettes. You're welcome to smoke it.

I'm not telling you not to smoke it. Just make sure that the Lord is also willing to take a cigarette from you. And I said, this is not a principle just for smoking cigarettes.

It's a principle for everything in life. Whatever you can't do in fellowship with Jesus, don't do it. You're sitting watching a television program or you're planning to watch a program that's going to come up in the next five minutes.

Okay, make sure the Lord's with you and say, Lord, you've got to watch this program. This is a really good one. And if the Lord says, yeah, I'd like to watch that with you.

If you feel in your spirit that He'd watch that with you, go ahead and watch it. But if you feel in your spirit, no, I don't think the Lord would be very happy. He'd probably get up and walk out.

And you better get up and walk out too. So, I say, you don't need a list of what is good and what is evil in any area. When you come to the Tree of Life, when you come to fellowship with Jesus and to have His Spirit dwelling within you, the Spirit within tells you.

You know, like the cat. Just like I said, a pig doesn't teach its little piglets to be dirty. A mother cat never has to teach the little kittens, listen, we're cats.

We must be clean. No. No mother cat ever teaches that to its kittens.

It's nature. Do you know the difference between doing what's right because of nature and doing what's right because you're taught that in your church? You know, children do what's right because they're taught. It hasn't become nature yet.

They're under law. Why do you do it? Because otherwise I'll be punished. Or I'll get a reward if I do it.

It's always the principle of reward or punishment that keeps people doing what's right when they're under the law. Why did Jesus do what's right? Was it because He was afraid of punishment? Was He hoping for some reward from the Father? Not at all. It was nature.

The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 9 that He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Have you seen cats? If they get dirty, they're licking themselves clean. They have such a tremendous passion for cleanliness.

I think more than any other animal that I know of. You don't see dogs licking themselves like that. Dogs are quite happy if they're a bit dirty.

They don't seem to bother too much about it. But not a cat. Even when you think a cat is absolutely clean, it's still licking itself.

It seems to have such a passion for cleanliness. And to me it's one of the best illustrations of what a Christian should be like with a tremendous passion for purity in nature. That it's not just to impress other people.

You know that no cat's licking itself to impress anyone. It's nature. It doesn't matter whether other people are watching or not.

I mean if you're holy when other people are watching you and not holy when other people are not watching you, well that's a bit suspect. I mean have you ever seen a cat that gets dirty and looks around to see if anybody's watching it and then decides whether to cleanse itself or not? No. It's nature.

It's completely unaffected by whether other people are watching or not. That's when you know it's become nature. That when sin bothers you even when nobody is watching you.

When sin bothers you even when nobody knows that you did it. Take for example sins in our thought life. You can be sitting right here and having a dirty thought.

Not a soul knows about it. But it bothers you because you got a nature that says hey that's not right. That bothers you and you confess it immediately to God and you ask God to cleanse you.

That is new covenant life. That is what the tree of life symbolizes. So we can say the tree of knowledge and the tree of life the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life symbolize the two covenants.

This was law and that was grace. This was life under the law and that is life under grace. This is through the Holy Spirit and this is through rules and regulations.

Now the old covenant is abolished on the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost ushered in the age of the Holy Spirit. But even after 2000 years a lot of Christians living by the principles of the old covenant even today and what's the result? Death.

The law always brings death. How do I know? Because that's how I lived for so many years after being born again. I did not know life in the spirit and when you don't know life in the spirit you have to live under the law otherwise you lose your testimony as a Christian.

You can't do certain things because you lose your testimony if you do them. So we're doing certain things because of a law. You know, certain churches have certain rules.

If you want to be accepted in their midst you've got to do things a certain way. And so people do it that way. Not because they believe God wants it but because that's the only way you'll be accepted in that church.

That's what I mean by tradition. So if you want to be accepted by the Pharisees you have to wash your hands up to your elbows regularly and particularly when they were looking. It didn't matter what you did how you washed it when they were not looking.

See, the essence of tradition is there. It brings death. It brings a burden.

It brings bondage. Now, in all of our churches, Christian churches there are certain traditions. You're not accepted if you don't conform to those traditions.

Jesus came to set people free. Now, not set them free in the sense of you know, if you remove all the chains from a pig and leave it like that it'll be terrible. But to remove the chains and replace it supposing by a miracle you could put a cat's nature into that pig you'd see that pig licking itself and you'd be amazed.

You'd say, how did that happen? You know, that's the miracle which God seeks, wants to do in us. If you can understand it. That is spirituality.

That is spirituality. When God has changed our nature within and made us love righteousness and hate iniquity. So, will a spiritual man fall into sin? Will a cat ever fall into dirty water? Tell me.

Possible or not? Yes. Is there any cat that can say, I'll never fall into dirty water? But, how do you know whether that animal that fell into that dirty water was a cat or a pig? Yeah, that's it. It's after they fall, what's their reaction? That you find out pretty quickly whether it's a cat or a pig.

So I say, can an unbeliever fall into sin? Sure. Can a believer fall into sin? Sure. But, I'll find out which is which after they fall.

What is your reaction when you fall? That'll show me whether you're a spiritual person or a religious person. So spiritual people can fall into sin. We try to avoid it.

A cat doesn't deliberately go and jump into dirty water. But it can fall. But, you know by your reaction, you feel bad immediately.

You feel bad immediately as soon as you fall into sin. Then you're on the right path. I don't mean, you know, where you're caught.

You know, a thief can weep when he's caught by the police. But you don't know whether he's weeping for his stealing or for the discomfort of being caught by the police. We find that.

Why do we have to go for thieves? Just look at your own children. And when they do something wrong and you catch them. And they feel very uneasy.

Are they feeling uneasy because they did something wrong? Or are they feeling uneasy because you caught them? Usually it's because you caught them. Like someone said, Most believers live by one commandment, not ten. And that commandment is, Thou shalt not get caught.

So long as you don't get caught, it's okay. Now, such people are living under the law. There's no change of nature at all.

It's like a pig that's never changed its nature. And saying, well, I should never be caught dirty by other people. A true, truly spiritual man may fall into sin, but he hates it.

It's said about Jesus that he hated sin and loved righteousness. A spiritual man loves righteousness. He may not always succeed in doing righteousness, but he loves it.

And he may not always succeed in avoiding iniquity, but he hates it. Because his nature is like that. That is the difference between a religious person and a spiritual person.

And that's what God wants to make us spiritual. He doesn't want to make us religious. Not at all.

So please remember this, and never get satisfied with the fact that other people say, think you're a good person. This itself should show us that the opinion of others is absolutely worthless. How much do other people know about your life? Not even 10% of your life.

They don't know more than 10% of your life. Even those who know you very intimately. You know, you can be married for 10 years and your wife may not know whether you love money or not.

How does she know? You could still be a lover of money in your heart. You can carefully conceal that from everybody around you. You can have dirty thoughts continuously in your mind.

And even someone who lives with you for 20 years may not know it. Because it's an area of our life. Attitudes, thoughts, motives are all areas of our life that nobody knows.

And you can live with a person for 25 years and not know what his thoughts are, what his attitudes are, what his motives are. All you see is the external actions. So, a spiritual person is not one who is primarily concerned with his external actions.

See what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 23. In Matthew 23, Jesus said, Verse 25 and 26. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside it is full of robbery and self-indulgence.

You blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup and the dish, so that the outside of it may be clean also. Let me paraphrase verse 26. If you clean the inside of the cup, the outside will be automatically clean.

In other words, he was saying, what is the outside? The outside is what other people can see and hear. My actions, my words. You can know whether I've lost my temper or not.

But you cannot know whether I'm angry inside. And if I'm only interested in your testimony, I will make sure that I don't lose my temper, because I'll lose my testimony. And so long as I haven't lost my temper, outside, even if I'm angry inside, I'm happy.

A religious person is not bothered about the inside. He is concerned that outwardly, people must see him as a very gracious, a very nice, a very gentle, loving person. He wants a reputation for being generous than to be actually generous.

He may be a miser, but a stingy person. But he wants a reputation for being generous and good. And so he'll do things to impress people.

He will say things to impress people. Because he's concerned about the opinions of men. A spiritual person is not at all bothered about the opinions of men.

Because he's dealing with the inside. When he deals with the inside, the outside takes care of itself. In other words, you know how Jesus said, the Old Testament said, don't commit murder, I say don't get angry.

If you deal with the root of it, the outside evil will never come forth. So Jesus, as I said, the outside is what I speak, my actions and my words. What is the inside of the cup? The inside of the cup is my thoughts, my attitudes to people, which I can conceal.

I can have a wrong attitude to a person, and I can conceal it with a smile, nice words, and my attitude may be bitter. Now a religious person is only concerned about the outward action and words. A spiritual person is concerned about his attitude to that person, more than just his words.

A spiritual person is not concerned merely that other people think good of him, but that God thinks good of him. That God who sees the heart can approve of him, and not just that all his friends in the church approve of him. You see, our whole Christian religious system, unfortunately, is training people to be religious, to have a good, to create a good impression on other people as a good Christian.

Now why do I say that? How much of preaching do you hear in the average Christian church today on thoughts, on being pure in your thoughts, being pure in your attitudes to other people, and that your motives in doing something must be good? No, the emphasis is very often on doing good to other people. Well, I can do good to other people and get a tremendous reputation for it, but it may not be nature. It may be training.

You can train a dog to do certain tricks, and you can train a dog to act in a certain way, but it's still a dog. It doesn't change it. So, training that makes us do certain things mechanically, or gets us a name, doesn't make us spiritual.

God seeks to change the heart, and a spiritual person is concerned about the condition of his heart. Now turn back to Genesis 3, I was going to come to this. It says here in Genesis 3 that before sin came into the world, you had free access to the tree of life.

I told you that the tree of knowledge of good and evil is just teaching you what's good and evil, like the law with ten chains holding the pig from getting dirty. The tree of life is the Holy Spirit communicating God's nature to us, making us hate sin, love righteousness, do what is right, avoid what's evil inwardly. Now, before Adam sinned, he could go straight to the tree of life without any problem.

But you know what happened after Adam sinned? It says here in verse 24 of Genesis 3, he drove the man out and to the east of the Garden of Eden, he stationed the cherubim. Cherubim is just plural for cherub. Cherub, plural is cherubim, cherubs.

Angels, with the flaming sword, which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. Now there's symbolism here. In that time in Eden, it was a physical sword, flaming sword, a sword which is on fire, going around the tree of life continuously so that Adam could not approach it, Adam and Eve could not come anywhere near it.

What is the meaning of this? That today we cannot come to the tree of life unless that sword falls. First on Christ, at Calvary, and secondly, on my self-life. That sword symbolizes the way of the cross, the way of death to my self-life.

The only way I can partake of that life of Jesus, which the tree of life symbolizes, is by death to my own self-life, which I've inherited from Adam. A lot of Christians who are willing to give up all their sin and say, Lord I want to ask you to come and cleanse me from all my sin, are not equally willing to give up their self-life. I want to show you a verse in 2 Corinthians 4, which exactly describes what I just said.

2 Corinthians 4, and verse 10 and 11. Try and understand these verses in the light of the flaming sword that went around and around the tree of life that we read in Genesis 3. And see if this is not an interpretation of Genesis 3, 24. What you read in 2 Corinthians 4, 10 and 11.

Always carrying about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, that's the tree of life, may be manifested in our body. We who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. What is this expression called the dying of Jesus? That's different from the dying of other people.

The dying of Jesus. Now, there is a dying that Jesus did on Calvary for the sins of the world. In that dying, you and I have no part.

You and I don't die for the sins of the world. There He died alone. The righteous person for all unrighteous people.

But this is referring to another dying which Jesus had all through His life. And which He asks us to have all through our life. That is the dying which Jesus referred to when He said, if anyone wants to follow Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me.

What is that? That is this dying to my self-life every day. Allowing that flaming sword to fall upon my own self-life. Where I give up my will in order to do God's will.

And do you know that Jesus had to do that for 33 years? I want to show you a verse in John's Gospel chapter 6. I often ask people this question. Can you tell me in one sentence why Jesus came down from heaven? And you got to tell me the answer in Jesus' own words. Why did He come down from heaven? Most Christians are not able to give the right answer.

Would you be able to give it? Now most Christians would say He came down from heaven to die for my sins. Well, that's true, but it's not the whole truth. In Jesus' own words, here is the answer.

In John 6, 38. I have come down from heaven. What for? Not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.

In other words, to deny His own will, which He had as a human being, and to do the will of His Father. Part of that, part of that was dying on the cross. That was only one part of it.

There was a whole list of things which come under the heading of not my will, but the Father's will. One of them was dying on Calvary's cross. So that was not the only reason why He came to earth.

He came to earth to spend 33 years not doing His own will, but the will of His Father. He spent a lifetime denying His own will in order to do the will of His Father. The same thing is expressed in other words, in Romans chapter 15 and verse 3. Romans 15, 3, it says Christ never pleased Himself.

I want to encourage you to think about that verse for a little. Think about it. The Bible says we must meditate on Scripture.

Here is a good verse to meditate on. Christ did not please Himself. Now, to say Christ did not sin, we can all understand that.

But Christ did not please Himself. Why didn't Jesus take a vacation in Rome after having preached for say one year? Don't you think the Lord's servants should have a little vacation after years of heavy work? No. Do you think Jesus would have sinned if He had gone to Rome? Was Rome such a terrible place that Jesus would have sinned? Why didn't He take a vacation in Rome? I don't believe there is any sin in taking a vacation to Rome.

See, that comes under the category of there were certain things that Jesus did not do. Not because they were sinned, but because they were not in the will of the Father for Him. There was a plan that God had made out for Jesus and a vacation in Rome didn't figure in that plan.

That's all. It's got nothing to do with sin. I don't believe Jesus would have sinned whether He lived in Jerusalem or Rome or Timbuktu.

He would never have sinned anywhere. But, it was more than sin. Does that fit into the Father's plan for my life? Now, a lot of believers they feel they've reached great heights when they don't sin.

But, there's something more. Is that in the Father's plan for your life? Or are you doing it because it pleases you? Christ never pleased Himself. He came from Heaven not to do His own will in any area, but to do the will of His Father.

Now, a lot of Christians don't want to live that type of life because they discover that they'll have to deny themselves many things in their life. And they say, well, so long as I don't sin, I'm okay. But, I find I'm tremendously challenged by this one fact.

That there was one man who walked on this earth, who lived the most fulfilling life that any human being could ever live. And that was Jesus Christ. And what was the secret of it? The secret of it was He never pleased Himself.

He never did His own will. And if you're willing to pay that price, you can have the most fulfilling life you can ever live as a human being on this earth. That's how a spiritual man lives.

A religious man doesn't want to pay that price. He wants to be a Christian and enjoy himself as well. Do a lot of things that please Himself.

And ends up, okay, living a fairly decent life, but not the maximum potential of His life is not realized. He can live a hundred years and maybe He's done only what God wanted Him to do in two years. A lot of His life is wasted.

How many of us would like to waste 98% of our money? You know, it's true that most Christians value their money more than their time. They'd be very careful with their money. But they don't realize that so much of their life is not effective for God.

And it doesn't disturb them. God's got a plan for your life, my brothers and sisters. And I always say that to young people.

One of the things that gripped my heart when I was 20 years old was that God had got a plan for my life. I didn't want to just avoid sin. I wanted to fulfill God's plan for my life.

Every day to be where God wants me to be. Not to go to any place where God doesn't want me to go. Say, Lord, You know where my life can be most useful for You.

And I have no choice. I don't want to choose that which is comfortable for me. I want to choose what will accomplish the most for You.

Does that make a person unhappy? On the contrary, I believe the happiest person that ever walked on earth was Jesus Christ. And anyone who follows this way will be supremely happy. Happiness does not

come through possessions.

Happiness does not come through comforts or sin or luxuries. Happiness comes through doing the will of God in every area. And that's what a spiritual man understands.

A religious person at the most he may want to avoid certain sins. So just because we want to avoid sins doesn't make us spiritual. To be spiritual is to be like Jesus who denied His own will and did the will of His Father.

And now this is what the devil says, if you try to live like that, it's going to be a tremendous burden. No, it won't be a burden. It'll be a delight.

You know, we'll think more about it further. Let's pray. Lord, we believe that You have set before us an invitation to a far higher life that many of us are living right now.

You call us to come up higher and I pray that we will all respond to that call. Not just many of us, but all of us. We don't want to spend our earthly days in a way in which we'll have regret when we stand before You finally.

Make our life count for You, Lord. We pray, each one of us, that we choose the way of the cross every day of our earthly life. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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