

The Fear of the Lord

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the fear of the Lord, self-judgment, and the sword of the Spirit in building a pure and Christlike church.

Scripture: Proverbs 9:10

Topics: "Fear Of God", "Church Leadership"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of building the church with the foundation of the fear of the Lord, emphasizing that wisdom comes from reverencing God and self-judgment before Him. He highlights the necessity of crucifying the flesh and embracing death to the self-life to partake in the divine nature. Poonen stresses the role of church elders in wielding the 'sword' of truth to maintain purity and zeal for God's honor, drawing parallels to Phinehas' zealous act in saving Israel from destruction. He challenges church leaders to prioritize God's glory over personal reputation and comfort, echoing Jesus' zeal for God's house in driving out impurity.

Transcript

The church is pictured in the New Testament as a house that God is building; and (Proverbs 24:3) states that a house can be built only by wisdom.

A disciple does not become wise by merely studying the Scriptures. That only increases his knowledge. It is the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). The fear of the Lord is the ABC of the Christian life. James 3:17 states that "the wisdom from above is first of all pure." Therefore all who want to build the Body of Christ must learn the fear of the Lord first. They must be able to say to others: "Come and I will teach you the fear of the Lord"(Psa. 34:11).

We may emphasise doctrinal accuracy, emotional experiences, praise and worship, evangelism and whatever. But if the foundation of the fear of the Lord is absent underneath it all, everything that we've built will collapse one day.

The church cannot be built by programs, activities, money, human strategies or by any principle of the business world. Christian work that is done by such principles may look impressive to human eyes. But when God tests it by fire, it will be seen to be only wood, hay and straw (1 Cor.3:11-15).

The distinguishing feature of God's house is self-judgment (1 Pet.4:17) - a self-judgment that is the result of living before God's face. Isaiah, Job and John all saw their own nothingness and sin when they saw God (See Isa.6:5; Job 42:5,6; Rev.1:17).

When Adam and Eve violated God's holiness, they were driven out of Eden. God then stationed cherubs with a flaming sword in front of the tree of Life to guard it. This tree of Life represents the eternal life (the divine nature) that Jesus came to give us. The sword typifies the cross that has to slay our Self-life, before we can partake of the divine nature. It is true that the sword first fell on Jesus. But we were crucified with Him too (Gal.2:20). And "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal.5:24).

Like the cherubs, the elders in a church must wield this sword and proclaim that the only way to the divine life is through death to the flesh. The way back to fellowship with God is via that sword. It is because this sword is not wielded, that most churches today are filled with compromisers and have ceased to be expressions of the body of Christ.

In (Numbers 25:1), we read of a time when the Israelites began "to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab". One of the Israelites even brought a Moabite woman into his tent (v.6). But one priest saved Israel from being destroyed as a nation that day - Phinehas. He was so zealous for God's honour, that he took a spear immediately, went inside that tent and killed both the man and the woman (v.7,8). Then God stopped the plague (v.9). But by then, 24,000 people had already been killed. The plague was spreading so rapidly that if it had not been for that one "cherub who wielded a sword" that day, the plague would have killed the whole camp of Israel.

Do you see how valuable it is to have "a cherub with a sword" in every church?

The plague is spreading rapidly in Christendom today, because there are not enough Phinehases who know how to use the sword. Far too many elders and preachers are men-pleasers who constantly urge us "to love the Midianites". The devil will give us a hundred arguments as to why we should not use the sword in the church. He will even quote Scripture to support his arguments - as he quoted scripture to Jesus.

What did Phinehas have to gain personally by his using the sword? Nothing. On the other hand, he had much to lose - especially a reputation for being kind and gentle!! He would also have been the object of a lot of backbiting and anger from the relatives and friends of the man he killed. But it was the glory and honour of God's Name that motivated Phinehas. And God put His seal of approval on Phinehas' ministry, by saying, "He was jealous with My jealousy" (Num.25:11). In the final analysis, God's seal of approval is the only thing that matters. The Lord went on to say about Phinehas, "Behold I give him my covenant of peace, because he was jealous for his God" (Num.25:12,13). In a previous chapter, we saw how the Lord had given the Levites too His covenant of peace because they used the sword (Mal.2:4,5).

There is no peace in many churches today because they have sought for peace in a human way - without using God's sword. The result is strife and contention. The peace of Christ is bought with a sword (that slays the Self-life) - both at home and in the church.

Those who are in leadership in a church must burn with a jealous passion for the honour of God's Name, if they are to preserve the church in purity. They must forget about getting a reputation for being kind and gentle, and be concerned only about the glory of God's Name.

It was this passion for the honour of God's Name that made Jesus drive the money-changers and the sellers of doves out of the temple. Zeal for God's house consumed him (John2:17). This is a major part of what it means to be Christlike. But who is interested in being Christlike if it is going to make him unpopular and misunderstood?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-fear-of-the-lord/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net