

The Final Judgement

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus and pleasing God, and warns against the dangers of spiritual arrogance and settling unsettled matters.

Duration: 56:29

Scripture: Acts 13:27, Romans 2:16, Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 4:5

Topics: "Judgement Seat"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life that aligns with God's blueprint for us. He warns that on the day of judgment, all our actions, thoughts, and motives will be revealed, even the secrets we have hidden from others. The speaker highlights that many who are considered great in the eyes of others may be shocked to see the truth of their private lives and how they handled their resources. The sermon emphasizes the need to live in accordance with God's Word and to be mindful of our actions, as everything is recorded and will be judged by God.

Transcript

When Jesus came to earth, Israel had lost their vision of God, the vision that their original leaders like Moses and Joshua had. And yet they went on with their meetings. Just because they had lost contact with God didn't mean that they wouldn't have meetings.

They were still very religious people. They had their meetings, they had their festivals, they paid their tithes, they sang songs, they clapped, they danced, they did all types of things. But with all their religious activity, and they had the true Bible, that means from Genesis to Malachi, they had the true Bible which was read every Saturday, every Sunday on the Sabbath day in their synagogues.

And yet, we read this verse, I'd like to read a verse to you in the Acts of the Apostles and chapter 13. Acts of the Apostles chapter 13 and verse 27. It says here that those who lived in Jerusalem, who lived in Jerusalem at that time, those were the most religious people in Israel and their rulers.

Rulers meaning religious heads like we would consider a bishop or an archbishop, etc., did not recognize him, did not recognize Jesus, and did not recognize the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath and fulfilled them by condemning him. Now, when Jesus came to earth, there were already many religions on the earth. And if the Hindus had rejected Jesus, we could understand that.

Or if the Buddhists had rejected Jesus, we could understand that because he was not referred to in any of their scriptures. Or all the other religions, Egyptian religions and whatever religions there were in Europe in those days, if they had rejected Christ, we could understand it. But the amazing thing is that it was people who read the Bible every week.

They read in Genesis about the seed of the woman. They read in Exodus about the Passover lamb that was slain by whose blood Israel was redeemed. They read in the book of Leviticus about the sin offering.

They read in the book of Numbers about the brazen serpent that was lifted up, which is a picture of Christ on the cross. They read in Isaiah 53 about the lamb that was slaughtered and was sheared and kept his mouth shut. They read in Psalm 22, the psalm of the cross, which begins with, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And all through, all the way to Malachi, you read about Jesus as the son of righteousness.

And yet, when he came into their midst, the one about whom the entire Old Testament spoke, they did not recognize him. Some people thought he may be a prophet. Once Jesus asked people, who do people say that I am? He said, they said, perhaps Jeremiah or Elijah, or one of the prophets.

But most of the leaders, they looked at Jesus Christ when he came to the synagogue and did those amazing miracles, and they were convinced that he was the prince of devils. They called him Beelzebub. Now, just think of that.

People who had read the Bible, who had read it every week for perhaps 50, 60 years, they could not identify the one about whom the scripture spoke. This shows us how the true religion, and by the way, that was the only true religion on earth at that time, the religion that was found in the nation of Israel, it was the only true religion. And yet, that true religion, and the only word of God that was found anywhere on the earth at that time, was their Bible, Genesis to Malachi.

With the true Bible and the true religion, and worshipping one God, following the teaching of Moses, the prophet of God, with all that, with all that doctrinal accuracy, they could not recognize Jesus Christ. They had a religion, a form, but no life. And to be so far off the mark, I mean, some people were slightly off the mark, calling him Jeremiah or Isaiah, but the religious leaders were completely off the mark.

They thought he was the prince of devils. How is that possible? And yet, there were others, like an idol-worshipping Roman centurion, who at the cross said, truly this is the Son of God. And another Roman centurion, who came to Jesus for healing, who had such faith in Jesus Christ, that Jesus said, I have never found such faith in all of Israel.

I want you to think of that for a moment, how people who had not read the Bible could recognize him as the Son of God, and people who were steeped in the study of the scriptures thought he was the devil. Now, the reason I ask that question is, is it possible that the same thing can happen today? Is it possible that religious Christians who go to church every Sunday, read the Bible regularly, the only true religion or faith in the whole world today is Christianity? There is no doubt about that. The only book in the world which is inspired by God is the Bible.

Is it possible that people who believe in all this can somehow miss what God has for us in this day? If you had asked the Pharisees in Jesus' time, 2000 years ago, they would have said, oh no, we can never miss it. We will recognize the Messiah when he comes. But they couldn't.

It was their arrogance and their pride, their self-righteousness, that hindered them from recognizing the Son of God. And that same spiritual arrogance and pride and self-righteousness is found in a lot of Christians today. And then God allows their eyes to be blinded, that they do not recognize the truth.

And it is possible, my brothers and sisters, for us to miss what God has for us, and to discover in the final day when Christ comes again, and we stand at his judgment seat, and he shows us our life, the way he wanted us to live it on earth, and the way we actually lived it. And we will see the tremendous difference between the two. The blueprint he had made for our life, which would have made our life so satisfying, such a tremendous blessing to other people, and so fulfilling.

We may not have made as much money, but we would have been a far greater blessing to people. And instead of that, the Lord shows us the videotape of our life as we actually lived it, and we are going to have a lot of regret. And the reason why we preach God's Word, certainly the reason why I preach God's Word, I have said this often in our church in the last 27 years that we have had this church in Bangalore in South India.

I have said to them, the reason why I preach God's Word exactly as it is, is so that you will not have regret at the judgment seat of Christ. To me it is like going for an examination where you already have the question paper well in advance. Isn't that wonderful, to go to an examination where you have the whole question paper well in advance? But do you know that the judgment seat of Christ is going to be like an examination? And he has already told us the questions that are going to be asked in that day.

If you read this book, the answers are all here. And what would you think of a student who is given the question paper well in advance, years in advance, and still fails in that examination? You would think he is a very lazy person, deserves to fail. What would you think of a student who barely passes, when he should be getting 100%? How many of you parents are happy if your children get just pass marks, whatever it is, 40% or 50%? In most places in India it is 40%.

I have never met a parent who is happy with his child getting 40% when he could get 100%. And that is exactly what God wants for his children too. Just like you would not be happy with your child just scraping through and getting 40% when he could do so much better.

I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, that God is not happy with any of his children who just want to scrape into heaven by the skin of their teeth, just about made it and did not get 100%. Particularly when he has given us the question paper well in advance. The entire question paper is here in the book, in God's Word.

What is God going to judge when he comes again? The Bible says, let me just show you a few verses. First of all in Romans chapter 14, perhaps we should begin with Romans chapter 2. In Romans chapter 2 it says in verse 16, On the day when according to my gospel God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. So one of the things told us about the final day of judgment is that the secrets are going to be judged.

Things which nobody knew. Things which you have succeeded in hiding from your wife for 50 years or hiding from your husband for 50 years. All those things are going to be exposed.

The secrets of men are going to be judged. Let me show you another verse in Romans chapter 14. It says here, Romans 14 and verse 12.

Last part of verse 10 first. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. Verse 12.

Each one of us is going to give an account of himself to God. It's not a very popular thing for a lot of people to think of the day of judgment. That's like a student who tries to forget there's a final examination coming.

I mean that's foolish. By your forgetting about the final examination it doesn't mean you're going to escape it. You'll just fail.

You might as well recognize that on such and such a date the school is going to conduct the final examination for the year and you might as well be prepared for it. So we should also be prepared for that day which the Bible speaks about many times. I just want to show you a few of those scriptures.

Each one of us shall give an account of himself to God. I don't have to give an account for my wife. My wife doesn't have to give an account for me.

I don't have to give an account for my children. I have to give an account only for myself. The secret things in my life.

Let me show you another verse. 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 5. Now these are not words to scare anybody. I'm just trying to show you the question paper before the final examination.

You should be excited about it because if you got the whole question paper before you, you'll be ready for the final examination. Okay here's a little peep into the question paper. 1 Corinthians 4.5 says don't go on passing judgment before the time.

See we have a tendency to judge people without knowing the facts. Now no human court would do that. It's only believers who are foolish in doing that and of course a lot of unbelievers too.

Without knowing most of the facts, we pass a judgment. We look at the way a person dresses, the way the person speaks and we pass a judgment. We're crazy.

What do we know? We don't know anything about his inner life or his private life or his motives or attitudes or thoughts or anything and yet we have passed a judgment and therefore the Bible says don't do it. Don't go on passing judgment before the time and the Lord says all of you folks who are itching to judge others, God says I'll give you the time for it. There is a particular time when you can judge and you know when that time is? When God reveals the secrets of all men in the final day.

That time you can judge as much as you like because you'll know all the facts. Right now you don't know. That's what he's saying here.

Don't go on passing judgment before the time but wait until the Lord comes and when the Lord comes, what is he going to do? He's going to bring to light, there are two things mentioned here. First of all, all the things hidden in darkness. Now there are many many things in our lives which are we could say hidden in darkness in the sense that things that you have done which nobody knows about.

Things that are not right before God's eyes. Money transactions which are not righteous. Maybe it was 20 years ago, it doesn't make a difference how long ago it was.

If it was not right, it was not right and if it is not settled, it's not settled. Time does not erase sin. Please remember that.

It could be 50 years ago. I remember once when I was converted, one of the things the Lord told me was to write a letter to a friend of mine from whom I had stolen 10 years earlier, nearly 10 years earlier, one single stamp. A very trivial matter but it was an unsettled matter.

I had stolen something. It was when I was 10 years and 11 years old. It didn't matter.

I looked like a fool writing to this man about something which didn't probably mean much to him in any way but it was still wrong. It was not enough that I had confessed it to God. I had wronged a man and I wrote that letter.

That was nearly 41 years ago. I am so thankful that I did it. It is so important if you want to be right before God in the final day that your conscience does not trouble you about anything that you have done in your life towards God or towards man.

He is going to bring to you the things hidden in darkness. I want to ask all of you sitting here. This is the question paper.

This is the question paper for the final examination. Number one, the things hidden in darkness or the secrets of men as we saw in Romans chapter 2. Do you have things hidden in darkness that you are ashamed of that have not been settled with God and men? If you have confessed them to God, then the blood of Jesus has cleansed you. If you have settled it with man and confessed it to God, it is finished.

You do not have to worry about it. I am talking about unsettled matters. I am talking about unconfessed sin.

Things wrong done against God and towards people which have not been settled, which have not been confessed, which have not been forsaken. This is the question paper, my friends. God is giving us ample opportunity to get ready.

The other thing which the Lord is going to judge, He is telling us the question paper, is the motives of men's hearts. A lot of us take pride in the fact that we do certain good things, but good things can often be done with a bad motive. What do you think of what I am doing right now, preaching? Is that a good thing or not? It is a very good thing, but you do not know the motive with which I am doing it.

I may be doing it to get honor. A lot of preachers preach to get money. People may be doing it to become famous.

People may not be saying everything God tells them to say because that will offend some people. They may be doing it to please people. Then that good thing becomes corrupt.

Here is a beautiful apple being given to you. My question is would you eat it if the person giving it to you has got AIDS, or would you say no thank you? Even though you may be hungry, and even though there is nothing wrong with the apple, the problem is with the hand that is giving the apple. That is the picture of a good action done with a wrong motive.

It is not only preaching. You could do hundreds of things which are very good in man's eyes, but which are not good in God's eyes because He examines the hand which is offering the offering. Way back in the beginning of the Bible you read about Cain offering and offering to God.

There was not anything wrong with that offering. He was working in the fields and he brought the best of his crops. What else could he bring? He brought the best of his crops and offered them to God.

Remember, Cain was not an atheist. Cain was a deeply religious man. He brought the best of his offerings to God.

God said, sorry, I won't accept it. Just like you would not accept that apple offered to you by someone who has got AIDS. God wouldn't accept it from Cain because the Bible says God did not have regard to Cain or his offering.

So motive is going to be a very, very important factor in the day of judgment. Not what you did, but why you did it. Remember that.

The important question in the final day will not be what, but why. We can do good to get honor and that destroys the whole thing. Let me show you another verse in 2 Corinthians 5. It says, Paul had an ambition.

Now it's good to have ambition. It's good for young people to have ambition. I had an ambition when I was a young man and I did not know the Lord.

I joined the Indian Navy with the ambition to be the Admiral of the Navy. It's a good ambition. That was my goal in life.

I was working towards it and aiming for that position. Then one day Christ came into my heart and saved my soul. I realized that he had given his life for me and I said, Lord, what shall I do in response for all that you did for me? I'm going to give my whole life to you.

When I did that, my ambition changed. I still had ambition, but my ambition was different. My ambition became what Paul says here was his ambition.

2 Corinthians 5 and verse 9. Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, that means whether I'm on earth or in heaven, to be pleasing to God. What was Paul's ambition? Paul's ambition was not to make a lot of money. Paul's ambition was not to live a comfortable life.

Paul's ambition was not even to be a great preacher or even to establish churches. His one ambition in life, a passionate fire that burned in his heart was to please God. Somehow or the other, with the one life God has given me, I must be totally pleasing to him.

My thoughts must be pleasing to him. My words must be pleasing to him. My actions must be pleasing to him.

My attitudes to people must be pleasing to him. My motives must be pleasing to him. My financial transactions must be so upright that God himself can approve of it.

Every area of my life must be pleasing to God. That was like a burning passion in Paul's heart. Do you realize now why God could use Paul so much? And why he can't use a lot of wishy-washy Christians today? They don't have that ambition.

Okay, why did Paul have this ambition? That's also given us in the next verse. It says, because. The word for means because.

I have this one ambition in life to please God. Paul says, because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be rewarded for the deeds he did in his body according to what he did, whether good or bad. That means every, listen to that verse, rewarded or recompensed for every single deed done in this body.

You and I got this body when we came out of our mother's womb. And we have a thing in our brain called memory. And everything is stored in memory.

The things you did when you were three years old are stored in memory. Now, we may not always be able to recollect everything, but it's there. I heard of a brain surgeon who was doing brain surgery who, when he touched some part of this man's brain, this man suddenly remembered something that he had forgotten.

It was there. When the electrical impulse of something stimulated something, he suddenly remembered, hey, I remember that. It's there.

Even if you don't remember it, it's stored there. See, our memory is like a videotape. It started running the day we were born.

And you may not have known it, but it's been recording everything. And the interesting thing about this videotape is it can record motives and attitudes as well, unlike the normal videotapes we see. It's recorded every single thing you ever did in your whole life from the day you were born.

Good and bad. The videotape doesn't make a difference. Your memory doesn't distinguish between what is good and what's bad.

It's all recorded. Thoughts, attitudes, words, motives, actions, good deeds, bad deeds, financial transactions, everything, every account I ever wrote. Every single thing.

The way you treated some person somewhere thirty years ago. You may have forgotten about it. Your memory hasn't.

It's there. It's on the tape. And you know, when you think of all the billions, the billions of people that lived on the earth, it baffles our memory how in the world God is going to bring all these people up and reveal everything that they did for so many years.

It's all there in memory and God just rewinds the tape and it's played back. You know, in our mind, these things are stored. And I believe that even though the body perishes, the memory of it is stored in a man's soul, that the soul that's departed from his body when he dies.

And one day God's going to bring that soul back into the body in the day of resurrection. And he's going to stand before the Lord, every single human being that ever lived from the day of Adam is going to stand before the Lord and the Lord's going to rewind the tape. And as the tape is rewound, it plays it back for the whole world to see exactly how you lived.

Every single thing you ever did, thought, it's going to be pretty embarrassing for a lot of people, isn't it? The secret things, the things hidden in darkness, the motives of men's hearts. And that's why Jesus said, in that day, many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first. In other words, we're going to see this man who we thought was a great man of God and we begin to see the videotape of his life and we

get a shock, dear me, is that how he lived in private? Were these the thoughts going on in his mind all the time? We thought he was a great preacher, standing up and preaching to us every week.

And boy, and was that how he was handling money? All that money we gave him for God's work, was that what he was doing with it? You're going to get a lot of shocks. I'm not telling you a fairy tale. This is actually going to happen.

Heaven and earth will pass away. This word will never pass away. I believe that.

I'm more sure of this than of the fact that the sun will rise tomorrow morning. I'm much more sure of this. It's true.

These are not scary tales we tell children to scare them. No. This is reality.

Like they say, tell it like it is. This is exactly how it's going to be. And as it's played back you know, every single thing that man, we ever did with nothing hidden, no wonder Paul says, boy, he says, I want to please Him.

I want that videotape to show how I spent my life for the purpose with which God created man. And he says, therefore, verse 11, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. We urge others, prepare to meet your God.

If it is appointed unto men, Hebrews 9.27 says, Hebrews 9.27, it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment. Why is it going to be so? Because the Bible says, God created us for His pleasure. In Revelation 4.11, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honor, and power for Thou didst create all things, and for Thy pleasure they were created.

We were created to bring pleasure to God, to fulfill the will of God. Man was created to fulfill God's will. Just like the planets were created to fulfill God's will.

The planets were created thousands of years ago. Jupiter, Uranus, Saturn, Pluto, Mars, Mercury, they were all created thousands of years ago, and they have never disobeyed God for one second. You can set your watch.

Your watch goes wrong, but not those planets. They move in such perfect precision. I remember when I was working in the Navy, we could fix our position out in the high seas when we were far away from land by the position of these planets and the stars.

They were so accurate in their movement. They have done the will of God without any disobedience because they don't have a choice. That's the difference between them and man.

The only difference is man was given a choice. If you want, you can obey. Those planets were not given a choice.

They just had to obey. God could have made Adam like that, you know, like a robot, looking like a human being, but inwardly programmed like you program computers that will automatically go around doing God's will, just like these planets. But God didn't want a robot.

You know, some people ask this question, why didn't God make Adam in such a way that he could never disobey? Now, wouldn't that have solved all the problems? Well, I said, then Adam would have been a

robot. And I said, let me ask you, would you like an obedient computerized robot or a naughty child? Which one would you like? I've never heard anyone say they prefer an obedient computerized robot to a naughty disobedient child. Now, logically speaking, you really prefer a naughty disobedient child to an obedient computerized robot.

Aren't you crazy? No, you're not. You're made in the image of God. That's why you prefer a child to a robot.

Of course, you'd prefer an obedient child, definitely, to a naughty one, without a doubt, and so does God. But the point is that a robot has no feeling. It doesn't obey you out of choice.

A robot can bring you the newspaper, bring you your cup of coffee, but you're far more excited if your child brings you your slippers than if a robot does it, because it's out of choice. You know, when a little child clings to you and says, Dad, I love you, which robot can duplicate that? You can program a robot to do it. You won't be excited by that, because it doesn't have a choice.

God made Adam with choice, but he wanted Adam to fulfill his will. God made you and me with freedom of choice. He doesn't take it away.

And that's why I always say that one mark of a cult, and there are a lot of cults in Christendom, we've got to beware of them in our day. One mark of a cult is that the leader of that cult will take away freedom of choice from you. You've got to consult him for every little thing.

Even God doesn't demand that, but he does. You know, you don't have to ask God when you go and buy a shirt whether you should buy a blue one or a green one. God doesn't bother much whether you buy a gray one or a blue one or a green one.

When I go and buy clothes, I don't have to ask God what color I should buy them. God's given us common sense, but he wants us to please him in things that affect our conscience. That's different.

Whether I buy a blue shirt or a green shirt is not a matter of conscience, but there are other matters that affect our conscience. And your conscience tells you. You know, that's the thing that makes us different from all the animals, our conscience.

Let me show you Acts of the Apostles in chapter 24. Here also Paul speaks about the day of judgment. You know, we've been looking this evening at a number of verses in the New Testament that speak about that final day of judgment or what I call the final examination day.

And why are we as parents so eager that our children should go and write the examinations on the examination day? Even though they are scared, they're nervous, they don't want to go. Why do you as parents force them to go? Even if they got a little fever, you tell them to go. Why are you so keen that your son or daughter should go and face that tough examination? Why? Because you know that if he passes in that examination, he's going to be promoted.

Every examination, if you're successful in it, leads to a promotion. And that's why even if your child's got a little fever, you say, never mind my son, go and sit and write this examination. The child doesn't understand it, but you're older and you understand the importance of doing the examination.

Examination is very important. And we saw these number of verses which speak about the final examination for mankind and what is going to be important in that day. We already saw a number of verses, motives, secret things, things that are not settled in our private life.

Here's another verse like that, Acts 24. This is Paul's testimony. He says, I have a hope in God, verse 15, Acts 24, verse 15 and 16.

I have a hope in God, he says, which these men also cherish, that there will certainly be a resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked. There's going to be two resurrections, a resurrection of the righteous and a resurrection of the wicked. And he says, because I believe this, I do something about it.

It's like a child saying, because I know there's going to examination coming up next month, I'm doing something about it. I'm preparing for it right now. And that student will say, I'm not studying the subjects that are not going to come in that examination.

Which crazy boy would sit down and study subjects which are not coming in the final examination? He will only study the subjects which are coming in the final examination. Do you know one subject that's not going to come in the final examination? How much money did you earn on earth? I'm sorry to disappoint you, but that's not going to be a question in the final examination. How much did you know of the Bible? Even that's not going to be asked in the final day.

Why are you studying these subjects? They're not going to come in the final day. How much did you obey the Bible? That's going to come. Sure.

How did you treat other people around you? That's going to come. Sure. Study for the subjects that are going to come, my friends.

Don't waste your time with studying for subjects that are not going to come. What did other people think of you? Is that going to come? No, not at all. Not at all.

And yet this is the subject which a lot of Christians are studying very seriously. What do other people think about me? Let me do all that I can to create a better impression on people. It's not a subject that's going to come in the final examination.

Do you see how a lot of Christians are like stupid students? Studying for subjects which are not going to come in the final day. What are the subjects that are going to come? You know, this is where the devil deceives us. He makes us spend our time on things which are not important and leave out the subjects that are important.

Okay. He says, because of this, because I know there's going to be a final judgment, I do my best. Here's a zealous student who is preparing for the examination.

He says, I do my best to always maintain a blameless conscience before God and before man. That's going to be very important. That's a subject.

What does your conscience tell you? Your conscience is not a perfect guide. The Holy Spirit and God's Word are the perfect guide, but our conscience is a pretty good guide to whether God is pleased with us, our lives or not. And God's will is that our conscience should grow in sensitivity.

You know, when we are first converted, I know people who come to our church in India who, I mean, when they are first converted, their life is so bad, they are slapping their wife every other day. Okay. But then they come to Christ and they come to the church and their conscience bothers them about slapping their wives.

But it doesn't bother them about yelling at their wives. So they stop slapping, but still yell at their wives. And you know, just like a child when it comes into kindergarten or the first grade, he doesn't know much, but it doesn't matter.

A year goes by and it goes to second grade, hopefully. And so this chap, a year later, he discovers that, hey, yelling at my wife was wrong too. That means he's progressed.

So his conscience is becoming a little more sensitive. And like that, he begins to be more and more sensitive about little, little things, which means he's progressing. Have you been progressing? Or are you defeated by the same things you were defeated by 20 years ago? How would you feel if your little boy is still struggling with addition after sitting in the kindergarten for 20 years? Horrible thought, no? He should be struggling, but he shouldn't be struggling with the same subject.

You know, a child is struggling with addition first and then with subtraction, and then he's struggling with multiplication, and then he's struggling with division, and then he's struggling with square root, and then by the time he gets to the 11th grade, he's struggling with calculus. And I mean, when he gets to PhD, he's still struggling, but he's not struggling with addition. So the Christian life is a struggle, no doubt, but it shouldn't be with the same old sins that we were defeated with 20 years ago.

That's serious. That means we're not progressing. Something's wrong.

We haven't taken our Christian life seriously enough. We haven't taken our studies seriously enough. What would you think of a 20-year-old who's still sitting in the kindergarten? You'd say, without any doubt, he hasn't taken his studies seriously.

And what would you think of a Christian who's been 20 years and still defeated by anger, and bitterness, and lust, and an unforgiving spirit? I'd say, brother, you haven't taken your Christian life seriously. It's exactly what I tell that 20-year-old who's sitting in a kindergarten. You haven't taken your studies seriously.

There are other people who joined school with you who are in college today. You're still sitting here. And I would say to some other people who became Christians at the same time you became, and look where they are today.

Their life is so useful to God. They've become overcomers. And here you are sitting defeated by the same old thing.

Why? Was God partial to him? No. He took his life more seriously. He believed in the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked like Paul, and therefore he did his best to keep his conscience blameless before God and before men.

In other words, Paul is not saying that I never made a mistake in my life. Neither is he saying I will never make a mistake in my life. Let me illustrate to you what it meant by Paul saying, I kept my conscience clear before God and men.

Turn to the previous chapter, chapter 23. It's an amazing statement that Paul makes here. I think Paul was about 60 years old when this thing happened.

It says in Acts 23, Paul said, Brethren, I have lived my life, verse 1, with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day. I've lived with a perfectly good conscience. And when the high priest heard it, he commanded those standing beside him, verse 2, to strike Paul on the mouth.

And Paul said to him, God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall. Do you sit to try me according to the law in violation of the law, order to me to be struck? Do you think that's the way a Christian should speak to a judge? Is that the way Jesus spoke when he was struck on the mouth? Not at all. So what's all this good conscience he spoke about in the previous verse? And now you'll see it.

As soon as he was aware of it, he admitted it. Oh, it says you shall not speak evil of your ruler of your people. And no doubt he apologized immediately.

That's what I mean by a good conscience. That as soon as you're aware that you did something wrong, you settle it with God and with men. Lord, I'm sorry.

And if you spoke rudely to your wife, say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, darling. I'm sorry.

I should not have spoken to you like that. It's my mistake. And your conscience is clear.

Do you do it? What is the time gap between your knowing that something was wrong and you're setting it right? Six days? The Bible says, don't let the sun set on your anger. In Ephesians 4, I think it's the 26th verse. Don't let the sun set on your anger means in those days, by sunset, people went to sleep.

They didn't have electricity. Sunset was the time to pack up and go to bed. They woke up with sunrise.

So basically what that verse meant was don't go to bed with something unsettled. That's basically what that verse means. Did you hurt somebody? Did you get upset with someone? Okay, before you go to bed, settle it.

That's the outer limit. It doesn't mean you have to wait until you go to bed. You could settle it the next second.

I mean, Paul didn't wait till sunset to apologize to the high priest. And if you hurt somebody, you can apologize the very next second. But the outer limit is not the next day or the next month.

It's sunset. Keep your conscience clear. That is the most important thing if you want to be ready for the final examination.

I don't know what your conscience is bothering you about right now. Is there something in your life unsettled? The Bible says, 1 John 1.9, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we confess our sins, if we come to the Lord and acknowledge, Lord, that was wrong.

It's very difficult for man to do it. You remember Adam? God came to him in the garden and asked him, Adam, did you eat of the tree I told you not to eat? There are only two possible answers to that question, yes or no. It's like these multiple choice questions that nowadays in question papers, they ask you a question and they have two boxes there underneath saying, A, yes, B, no.

Pick whichever you want. You know what Adam did? He wrote C. My wife gave me this thing and you gave me this wife. So it's not really my fault.

I did it, I know. And that's how man is. Always trying, instead of saying, Lord, I did it, I'm sorry I did it.

That would have been the plain answer. Pick A, yes. But we don't pick A. We write underneath C the reason, big long reason why I did this and how somebody else prompted me and all that.

And what's the use? You think we can fool God with all these excuses? But man's been an expert right from the garden of Eden to put the blame on somebody else for his sin. And that's the reason why we're not ready to meet the Lord on the final day. So that's the first thing we need to get rid of.

Do you know the difference between being in Adam and in Christ? There are hundreds of differences, but let me point out one to you. If you're in Adam and the Holy Spirit convicts you of some sin, just like God coming to Adam and saying, did you eat of that tree? All you have to do is to say, Lord, I did it. Instead of saying, I did it, you justify yourself by so many excuses.

Oh, I was under pressure or this thing happened and it caught me off guard or so many things. There's no need for all that. Stop justifying yourself.

Stop putting the blame on somebody else. Just pick A, yes. I did it.

Solves the problem. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and righteous to forgive us and to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. The matter is settled.

So that's the number one lesson that we need to learn. Acknowledge your iniquity immediately. And what does it mean to be in Christ? To be in Adam means to blame somebody else for your sin.

To be in Christ, how did Jesus do it on Calvary? It was the exact opposite of Adam. He took the blame for other people's sins when he died on the cross. You notice the difference? Adam could not take the blame for his own sin in Eden.

On Calvary, Jesus took the blame for other people's sins. Now let me ask you, are you in Adam or are you in Christ? Can you take the blame at least for your own sin? Or are you always finding some excuse and blaming somebody else? Just think what a lot of peace would come into a home if we were sensitive to keep our conscience right, to apologize, to say these simple words, I'm sorry, that was my mistake, please forgive me. Some of the most difficult words for any human being to say.

Try it if you don't believe me. I am sorry, that was my mistake, please forgive me. You think it sounds easy, it's not.

You try it out sometime and you'll find it's not so easy. But if you can do it, you'll be ready for the final examination. And we may have to do it many, many times because we're human, we make mistakes, we do wrong things.

If I can keep my conscience sensitive, Lord, that thought that came into my mind that really dishonored you, I'm sorry, nobody saw it. It was only between you and me, but it was filthy. Forgive me, cleanse me.

It was wrong, that attitude I had to that person. Forgive me, cleanse me. Keep your conscience clear.

We'll continue, let's pray now. While I head about in prayer, I want to ask you if God spoke into your heart this evening concerning something. It's like a multiple-choice question.

Will you say, yes, Lord, that's my mistake? And at the first opportunity, I want to set it right. I want to confess it, first of all, to you, my sin, and also at the first opportunity to the people I sinned against. I want to ask forgiveness.

I want to set matters right. I want to live before you. I want the blood of Jesus to cleanse my videotape of that part of it which I'm ashamed of.

Thank you, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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