

(The Full Gospel) 16. Will You Shrink Away From the Lord When He Returns?

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of judging ourselves and avoiding judgment of others, lest we shrink away from the Lord's presence in shame.

Scripture: John 8:1

Topics: "Repentance", "Judgment Day"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of abiding in Christ to have confidence and not shrink away in shame at His coming. He highlights how believers may unknowingly judge and criticize others while being blind to their own faults, leading to shame when faced with their own sins in the light of God's presence. Poonen emphasizes the need for self-reflection, repentance, and gratitude towards others to avoid regret and shame when standing before the Lord.

Transcript

"Abide in Him, so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." (1 John 2:28).

The coming of the Lord is something that all believers are looking forward to with great joy. Why then will some believers have to shrink away from the Lord's presence in shame when He returns?

There could be many reasons for that. But I want to point out one.

In John 8:1-12, we read of the Pharisees bringing a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, accusing her, and then shrinking away from His presence in shame.

Why did they shrink away from the presence of the Lord? Because Jesus told them that the first person to begin throwing stones should be the one who has no sin in him.

Suddenly they realised, in the glaring light of Jesus' presence, that what they had accused the woman of, they were all guilty of themselves.

In Romans 2:1, we read,

"Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."

When we stand before the Lord, we will discover this amazing fact: That every single matter in which we ever pointed a finger at another, we were guilty of ourselves, in some measure, at some time, in our lives.

God's light will be so bright in that day, that we will see clearly that we ourselves committed the very same things that we accused others of doing. It is this that will make every believer who has accused others shrink away from the Lord in shame. It will also become evident then that such believers were also Pharisees themselves.

Many believers are so sharp-eyed that they pass judgment on even the smallest words and actions of others. They criticise even the way others pray, testify or preach. There will always be something imperfect in the best things that anyone does, because we all have a flesh in which nothing good dwells. But the one who has an accusing spirit does not recognise any faults in himself, but only in others.

We will "know ourselves" fully - the full extent of our selfishness and our pride - only in the perfect light of God, when our Lord returns (1 Corinthians 13:12). If we could see ourselves more fully now, we would never again judge or criticise anything in another person, for we would see that we have the same defect ourselves.

The more we have seen the corruption within our own flesh, the less we will find fault with others around us.

Consider this: Isn't it true that you would have to be a first-class hypocrite to criticise adultery in another, if you had just committed adultery yourself that very morning? It would take a hard and insensitive father to criticise his child for spilling its milk on the floor, if the father himself had spilt his cup of coffee two minutes earlier!!

Why then do we judge and criticise others? Because we imagine that we are incapable of ever doing such things ourselves.

That was why the Pharisees were so bold to come to Jesus with the woman caught in adultery. But when they came into Jesus' presence, His light exposed that very same sin in their own hearts. Then "they shrank away from Him in shame".

This will be the fate of all who have judged and criticised others, when the Lord returns: They will shrink away from the Lord in shame, when they see the depth of corruption in their own flesh, and how they had judged and criticised the same things in others.

It is very easy for any of us to see where another person is behaving selfishly or in stubbornness or in pride.

Maybe you have often said, "So-and-so is a very selfish person", or "So-and-so is a very stubborn, self-willed person" or "So-and-so is a very proud person". And what you said may have been absolutely true.

But if you have ever said such words about another, you can be certain that when Christ returns, God will show you greater areas of selfishness, stubbornness, self-will, and pride in your own life.

And when you see that in that day, you too (like those Pharisees) will shrink away from the Lord's presence in shame - for having been so self-righteous as to judge others for much smaller degrees of these sins.

Do we realise that there is some form of these evils in every single one of us - which we cannot see?

If we realised this, we would be very slow to judge others for these things. We would assume that those others, whom we are judging, also (like us) cannot see their own selfishness, stubbornness and pride.

But unfortunately the flesh is such that we don't make such merciful allowances for others, where we make plenty of allowance for ourselves.

That is why God's Word says that "judgment will be merciless on the one who has shown no mercy himself" (James 2:13).

And that is why Jesus said, "Judge not" (Matthew 7:1).

We have to be careful even when we say, "I have forgiven all those who have harmed me" - for there is pride and conceit even in the very feeling that others have harmed us.

Peter asks, "Who can harm you?" (1 Peter 3:13). The answer is obviously, "No-one" - because as Paul said, "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). If everything works together for our good, how can anyone ever harm us?

Yet there are multitudes of believers today who feel that some people did harm them and their families. What shall we say to such believers, in the light of God's clear Word? Just this: "Let God be found true, even though every man - including you - be found a liar." (Romans 3:3).

I have heard self-righteous believers in the church testifying that while others have harmed them and their children, they have forgiven them. They have obviously congratulated themselves for their Christ-likeness!! There is enormous pride however in such a testimony, for what such believers are actually saying (if I were to paraphrase their words) is, "I am surrounded by people who have behaved like the Devil towards me - even in the church. But I (spiritual man/woman that I am) have behaved like Jesus towards them and forgiven them. See how magnanimous and good I am!!"

Their testimony has reminded me of the nursery rhyme where Little Jack Horner puts his thumb into his pie, pulls out a plum and says, "What a good boy am I"!!. May God save the church from such Pharisees!

Holy-Spirit-given prophecy will always glorify Jesus (Revelation 19:10).

It is the spirit of Satan that points out one's own goodness and highlights it against the supposed evil of others!

Such believers may not be telling lies when they say that they have forgiven those who harmed them. But they obviously don't make allowance for the fact that those others may have done those things unconsciously. And further, they don't have any light on how much they themselves may have hurt those others in many other ways.

When the Lord returns, they will see that it is they themselves who had behaved like the Devil with their accusing spirit. And they will also see that they had harmed others much more than anyone had harmed

them.

But such believers cannot smell the stink of their self-righteousness right now!! For Pharisaism can disguise itself even in the cloak of a merciful attitude towards others!! That is how deceptive the flesh is!

If any of you have been like that, I hope you will get a little light on your self-righteousness and pride, at least now, so that you can see how much your behaviour has been like the Devil's, in your judgmental and critical attitudes towards others.

If you haven't seen the evil of this matter until now, have you considered why you haven't seen it as yet? Here is the answer: It is because you are not pressing on to perfection. You are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness. You are not purifying yourself as Jesus is pure. And therefore you are not really ready for the coming of the Lord (according to 1 John 3:2, 3). When the Lord comes suddenly, you will have to shrink away in shame from His presence.

It is good to ask the Lord to give you more light on yourself now, before it is too late.

One evidence of spiritual progress is that we regret some of the things that we did in the past - even what we did last year. That indicates that we are growing in wisdom. We may not have done anything evil. But we realise now that we could have done things a little more perfectly, and in a more Christ-like way. We did not sin consciously perhaps, but we did sin unconsciously, for anything un-Christlike is sin.

Therefore those who say that they look back over their lives without any regret, must be those who have not grown at all. They must be in the same spiritual state today that they were in when they were first converted. They loved money then. They love money now. They lost their temper then. And they lose their temper now. Yet they have no sorrow or regret over their actions and their way of life. How blind such people are! Yet they have been so quick to pass judgments on others! What regret will be theirs when Christ comes again.

One who preaches God's Word in the church, if he is progressing spiritually, will preach in a more Christ-like way every year. But this can happen only if he is judging himself - his motives, his words, his manner etc., - after each time that he preaches. Very, very few of those who preach God's Word judge themselves after their preaching. So they continue on in the same monotonous, boring way, without the anointing or grace or power of the Spirit upon their lives, year after year.

Hungry souls will travel hundreds of miles if they can find a man of God somewhere, who has the touch of heaven on his ministry and who is worth listening to - even as the multitudes travelled to the wilderness of Judea to hear John the Baptist, and as they travelled from all over Israel to hear Jesus, and as the crowds in many cities travelled long distances to hear the apostle Paul.

Those who are elders, have you realised how much you have bored others, when you have preached in the meetings without any spiritual preparation and without the anointing of the Spirit? Maybe you have spoken carelessly and lazily, without either thought or prayer, and then gone on preaching for forty long minutes in a meeting. And the long-suffering brothers and sisters in your church have endured this torture, without a word of complaint! O, how much you have sinned against them! And yet they have kept quiet. Have you recognised your sin?

In many assemblies, the elders are not feeding their flock, but instead boring them to death with their long, tiring sermons. It is good for all elders to judge themselves and to ask some of the other brothers for an

honest opinion about themselves. Those who have lost the anointing should stop preaching and give the pulpit to some younger brother (like David) who has a fire and an anointing, instead of sitting (like King Saul) upon their thrones and hindering God's work.

How many of us have recognised that we must have unconsciously injured and hurt others, made demands on them, acted without consideration, taken advantage of the hospitality and goodness of others, written letters that wounded others, etc., without even realising it? And those others have suffered and borne with us, without even speaking a word to us about it.

How many of us have been thankful for the spoken and written ministry in the church that has preserved us from many sins that we would have fallen into long ago, if we had not had a place in the church?

How many of us have been thankful to God for our wives who have slogged away, day and night, serving us in multitudes of ways in our homes? We have taken so much for granted in our homes. How can we expect our children to be thankful to us, their parents, if we as husbands are not thankful for our wives. Our children have to learn such habits from us! Many husbands will discover when Christ returns, how evil and unthankful they were towards their wives. And many wives will discover in that day how evil and unthankful they were towards their husbands for all that their husbands did for them.

Have we even once expressed our thanks to God for our marriage-partners and our brothers and sisters? Yet how quick we have been to find fault with them, when we have seen even one mistake in them? And how quick we have been to forget all the good that they have done to us?

I remember hearing a story of a teacher who spread a large white sheet of paper with a small black dot in one corner, in front of his class of students once. He then asked the students what they saw. All of them said that they saw a small black dot in one corner. No-one said that they saw the large white sheet. That is how human nature is - blind to the good that there is in others. We only see their black dots.

This is only due to pride. Humble people never have any difficulty in being thankful to God for their fellow-believers. It is only Satanic pride that makes people unthankful for their brothers and sisters.

What good and wonderful brothers and sisters God has given us in the church! And we have been so foolish as to not recognize their worth. Let us learn to thank God for our brothers and sisters at least now.

If we can get some light on ourselves even by reading an article like this, can you imagine how much more light we will get on our selfishness and pride, when the bright light of heaven shines on us, at Jesus' return?

Esau did not find an opportunity for repentance "afterwards", even though he shed many tears then (Hebrews 12:17).

There will be an "afterwards" in all of our lives, when we stand before the Lord. In that day, we will discover that it is too late to learn to be thankful. It will be too late to weep then. Now is the time to judge ourselves and to mourn and weep, if we want to have no regret then.

Let us ask God then to give us a fresh revelation of the glory of Jesus. In that light, we will see the depths of selfishness, stubbornness, self-will and pride within our own flesh. And we will fall on our faces before Him in repentance and sorrow. Then it will be easy to finish totally with judging and criticising others.

Let us not be satisfied with purifying ourselves until we reach "Jesus' standard of purity" (1 John 3:3). If that is our goal, then we will not have to shrink away in shame when the Lord returns.

Source:

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