

The Lord Reproves All Whom He Loves

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of hearing challenging truths from the Bible, even when they go against our fleshly desires. It contrasts false prophets who speak to please people with the need for genuine rebuke and discipline from God as a sign of His love. The message highlights the significance of being willing to receive correction and rebuke, especially in a culture that prefers smooth words over strong truths.

Scripture: 1 Kings 22:13, Revelation 3:19, Hebrews 12:7, Isaiah 30:9, Galatians 3:1

Topics: "Receiving Correction", "The Danger of False Prophets"

Description

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Transcript

So some of the things that you hear in a good church are not things that our flesh likes to hear. For example, what we just heard about death to self. But most preachers, the Bible also says, like to tickle people's ears and keep them happy.

And that's how it was in the Old Testament false prophets. The distinction between the false prophets and the true prophets in the Old Testament was the false prophets would always say something that would keep people happy. And I don't have time to read it right now, but sometime when you get time, read 1 Kings chapter 22.

You read there about a time when Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to battle. They wanted to find out what was God's will. And 400 prophets came before them and said, God's going to help you to win.

They were the prophets of Ahab. And Jehoshaphat, you know, he was from Israel and he was from Judah and he felt a little uncomfortable about this. And he said, isn't there any other prophet? And Ahab said, there's another guy called Micaiah, but I don't like him because he always rebukes me and says things I don't like.

Jehoshaphat said, that's the one we must listen to. Call him. And somebody went to Micaiah and said, see all these 400 prophets have said one thing.

You also please fall in line and say the same thing. And he said the exact opposite. It's an amazing story there of how to be a true servant of God, to say something different, what 400 others have already said before you.

The message of death to self is hardly ever preached. And especially in an area like Silicon Valley with all the intellectual people here, they don't like to hear that. And you have to be careful that the spirit of this area doesn't get into us.

If somebody were to ask you, can you give me a, what is one evidence of God's love? Make a list of the way God proves that he loves me. There are many things we'd say like Christ died for me. And if earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, how much more will your heavenly father give? But I wonder how many of you would choose to say, I know the Lord loves me because he rebukes me.

Have you ever thought of that? Turn to Revelation 3, verse 19. The ways of the Lord are so different from the ways of man. Human love is completely different from divine love.

Revelation 3, 19, those whom I love, I reprove or rebuke and discipline. I remember as a young man, once I read somewhere that when you read the Bible and you only get words of comfort and never any rebuke, then the Lord is never speaking to you at all. You're just imagining that God is speaking to you.

I took that to heart that if I read the Bible and all I get is words of comfort, comfort, comfort, comfort, but never rebuke, correction, then I'm imagining that God is speaking to me. He's not speaking to me at all. Because those whom the Lord loves, he not only rebukes, he disciplines them.

We read in Hebrews in chapter 12, the last part of verse 7, what son is there whom his father does not discipline? Hebrews 12, 7 and verse 8. Take this seriously, this verse. If you are without discipline, of which all true children are partakers, you're illegitimate children. That means you're not really born again.

In plain words, one proof that you're born again is that God disciplines you. In your life, disciplines you when you slip up somewhere. He's very strict.

He's a strict father, but he's a very loving father, because he wants the best for you. He wants you to graduate with top marks. And so much is dependent on the preachers who preach the word.

What type of preachers would you like to listen to? If you go to YouTube, which preachers do you listen to? Most preachers would like to preach smooth words to people. It's like that in the Old Testament. Let me show you a verse in Isaiah chapter 30.

Even in the Old Testament, the middle of verse 9, Isaiah 30 and verse 9, the Lord says, these are sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the Lord, and who say to the prophets, you must not see visions. And they say to the prophets, you must not prophesy what is right. Speak to us pleasant words.

Speak smooth words to us. Christendom is full of people who say to preachers, speak smooth words to us. Don't speak strong words.

We won't hire you as a pastor anymore. We'll turn you out and look for somebody else. And that's why Christendom is in the state in which it is in today.

Backslidden, heading towards Babylonian captivity, if you have eyes to see. And the other thing I want to show you, if you turn to the book of Revelation and chapter 2 and 3, it's amazing whom the Lord rebukes. Elders.

Does he rebuke elders? The last message of Jesus Christ to the church is not go into the world and make disciples. That was before he left the earth. The last message in the Bible of Jesus to his disciples is rebukes to the elders in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. Those are his last messages to the church.

And how strongly he rebukes them. You know, if you read those chapters, five of those elders are rebuked. I don't have time to read through it all.

But to one of them, he says, almost like saying, I'm sick and tired of you. I'm going to spit you out of my mouth, Revelation 3.16. You read through that, it's amazing. These are not ordinary brothers.

These are the elders of the church. And he himself says in Revelation 1, I'm holding these elders in my hand. The seven stars are the messengers of the churches and I hold them in my hand.

How many elders receive the Lord's rebuke when he holds them? They think they're privileged and leaders. And a lot of pastors think like that. They're the leaders.

Nobody's there to rebuke us. But the Lord had a man called John, a faithful apostle. And he was not seeking popularity with these elders.

He just told them straight what he thought about them, which the Lord told him to say. And not only that, the interesting thing I see here is, you know, we are so concerned about our, we've learned such a lot of psychology that he said, when we correct somebody, make sure that nobody else knows about it and make sure you whisper to him in his secret, in his private, privately. The Lord doesn't believe in that type of psychology.

You would think that a message to an elder should be sent to him privately. John, please send a letter privately to this elder. Don't let the church know about it.

But you know what he says? He says in Revelation 1 and verse 11, write in a book, all these things that I'm going to show you. And these are all rebukes to the elders. And let all the seven churches hear about how the elders in other churches are being rebuked.

Wow. I would have thought that that church alone hearing it would be enough. I tell you, the more you humble yourself to read God's word, you learn one thing.

God says, my ways are not your ways. Most Christians I have met have not understood God's ways. They wouldn't think of rebuking an elder and sending that message to every church in the country.

That's God's ways. When you know God, you'll see that your ways are completely opposite to God's. Send it to all the churches.

And what all exposing all these people that one man's wife is influencing him, he says in chapter 2, verse 18. Another man has got a name that he's alive, but he's dead. Chapter 3, verse 1 and 2. It's amazing, strong rebukes.

There are many other things like this we see in scripture, which are so different from the way we think we should do God's work. Even Paul, when he writes to, for example, let me give you one example, Galatians chapter 3. He says to the Galatians, now this is not the diplomatic way to speak to people. You foolish Galatians.

Is that the way an apostle should speak to those who he's seeking to build up? He loved them so much. The only way to wake them up from their slumber was to use strong words. You foolish Galatians.

Who has bewitched you? Bewitch is worse than foolish. Bewitch means some demonic spell has come upon you. Imagine standing up before a congregation like this and saying, you foolish people, some demonic spell has come upon you.

You think this guy doesn't know the Lord who's standing up there. By the way, it's the apostle Paul. It's you who don't know the Lord.

So why don't we hear such rebukes nowadays? I'll tell you why. Because there are hardly any apostles. There are a lot of people in America who call themselves apostles, promote themselves as apostles.

You know, if you go to the internet, you find them. I've watched and listened to all of them. They are all humbugs.

I don't respect any of them. I have met in my life only one apostle, a genuine one, many years ago as a young man. And my fellowship with him changed the direction of my life.

He was a genuine apostle. One proof of it was all his 60 years of ministry. He never took a salary from anybody.

He never asked anybody for money. He trusted the Lord, lived very simply, and he heard God. And God used him to plant numerous churches.

I knew him as a very young man, and I remember the day the Lord called me to quit my job. I hadn't told anybody. I was sitting alone somewhere, and the Lord spoke to me clearly from his word.

And this brother happened to be around five minutes later. I mean, I had met him many, many times in previous years, but he came to me five minutes later and said, are you thinking of leaving the Navy? It was like a confirmation to me. I needed that confirmation.

There I knew a man who was in touch with God. When God spoke to me, God always spoke to him. And he gave me three bits of advice as a young man.

I worked close to him for many, many years. That's why I say he's the only apostle I ever knew in my life. And he told me three pieces of advice.

He says, one, never, and this is when I was about 23 years old, never in your life make your financial needs known to anybody ever, even if you have nothing. I followed that all these 60 years. Secondly, he said, live very simply.

Don't waste your money. What you need to buy, a little toothpaste and a few clothes, it's enough. Don't live a luxurious lifestyle if you want to be a servant of God.

He lived like that, I know, and he taught me to live like that. And that saved me from losing the anointing, saved me from losing my ministry. And the third thing he said, only three things, he said, when people accuse you, just keep quiet.

Don't reply. Ignore them. I'm deeply thankful that early in my life, God allowed me to meet such a man that helped me as a young Christian in serving the Lord to set the direction of my life.

God bless you all.

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