

(The Missing Messages in Today's Christianity) 7. Being Protected From Deception, Ourselves

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing what's missing in ourselves and being open to correction and guidance from the Holy Spirit in order to avoid missing messages in our churches and to love the truth about ourselves.

Duration: 56:54

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 2 Thessalonians 2:10

Topics: "Christianity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living in fear and seeking God's light to protect ourselves from deception. He warns that even genuine believers can become lost if they are not vigilant. The speaker highlights the deceitfulness of wrong desires in our flesh, which can make us believe that indulging in them is not serious. He also cautions against religious practices that give the illusion of holiness but lack true Christlikeness. The sermon concludes with a reminder that in the last days, many Christians will fall away from the true faith, emphasizing the need to guard against deception.

Transcript

So, today we want to think about how did these messages come to be missing in much of today's Christianity? Because if we understand that, then we can be careful ourselves. And aspects of the truth missing in our churches, and in our lives, and I believe there are. There could be portions in our Bible that are like that.

Portions that we neglect, portions that we don't take seriously. It's very easy to see what's missing in other people, but much more important is to see what's missing in us. So when we see something missing in others, that reminds us that perhaps something is missing in us.

It's like when you find that somebody is very difficult to bear with because of his peculiar mannerisms or habits. Or, you know, sometimes husband and wife get married, they are brought up in two different ways of life in their homes. And they come together and it's very difficult to adjust to each other because 25 years they have lived in some other way.

And now they have to live, try and live together and it's very easy for one to get irritated with the other because they are not doing it the way this person was brought up all their life. And that person is irritated with the first person because he's not doing it the way she was brought up. And everybody's got this foolish idea that of course my way is right.

And that's where all the problem arises. So one of the things, it can happen in a church where you find it difficult to bear with a brother because he's always doing things in a certain way that irritates you. Sometimes it can be just the tone of his voice that irritates you.

And that happens sometimes in husband-wife relationships when the tone of voice itself irritates the partner. And one of the things that has helped me is to recognize that I know God showed me this years ago that when I have to bear with a brother, he probably is unconscious of what he's doing that bothers me. He's just living his normal life the way he lived for 20-30 years.

But something in that way of life irritates me all the time, but he's not aware of it. And therefore I must be merciful to him. And the other thing the Lord taught me was that if he is like that, it's quite likely there may be something in me which irritates him, which I'm unconscious of, and which he is bearing with me very patiently, very silently.

And that has helped me to love my brothers. And I tell you, you husbands and wives, it'll help you to love one another. When you find something in your partner which really bugs you, bothers you, consider two things.

One, he or she may be totally unaware of it. That's the way they were brought up. You happen to be brought up in a different way.

Secondly, there is something in you which you are unaware of, which bothers him or her. And they are bearing with it silently. None of us are perfect.

So, if you recognize this, it'll help us. So, the same way in our church, we need to see, Lord, what are the areas of scripture that we are neglecting in our church? Search your heart. And you know, very often people say we are related to CFC.

We come to the conferences because we are connected with CFC. Well, I'll tell you something. In the different churches which are related to us, not all are equally spiritual.

Just because we are connected to CFC doesn't mean you're a spiritual church. Spirituality in a church depends on its leader. That's what we read in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. If there are missing messages in a certain church, it's because the leader has not got those things in his life.

Every church becomes like its leader. It's just like children. When children are born, you can see the image of the father or the mother, or both of them usually, in that child.

And more than that, the father and mother can have certain hidden sicknesses in their blood. And that gets transmitted to the child. And if both father and mother have the same sickness in their blood, that gets transmitted to the child.

The child looks very healthy. But there's something problem in their blood. It's exactly the same in a church.

If two elders have the same weakness, they will produce children with that weakness. It may be hidden for a long time. But it will manifest itself.

In other words, if two elders love money, they're going to have a church where people love money. Or if two elders are worldly, they will produce a church which is worldly. The reason we have two elders is so that at least one will balance out the other.

And generally speaking, when a father has a particular sickness in his blood, the mother usually doesn't have it. That's why they say you shouldn't marry close relatives. Because then there's a greater possibility of the sickness being transmitted in the blood.

But otherwise, generally speaking, father and mother may have different sicknesses that cancel out each other. It's exactly the same why we have two elders in a church and not one pastor. Because they balance out each other.

One person's weaknesses take care of the other. The other person's weaknesses take care of it. And there's less chance of deception.

There's less chance of having a torn Bible. Because unless one elder is a blind follower of the other, never expresses his opinion, unfortunately, there could be some elders like that, who never express their opinion. They just say, yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir.

Such a person should resign from eldership and go and sit in the back of the church. He's useless. Because the whole purpose of double eldership is that one person can say, hey, I don't agree with that.

Brother, I love you very much, and I'm going to be in fellowship with you until Jesus comes. But I don't agree with that. Sorry.

You know, that's the type of mature fellowship that we need to have among elders. And even among husband and wife. If you've got a wife who just say, yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir, to you, that's a useless wife.

God gave Adam a wife who was a helper to him. How can she be a helper if she doesn't correct him where he's wrong? I mean, if Adam's got a black mark on his face from some charcoal or something, and he says, darling, is my face okay? Yes, sir, your face is perfectly okay. Is she a helper? And the same way, if there's some other defect worse than a charcoal mark on your face, it could be something worse in your personality or character.

I hope you have a wife who tells you, listen, honey, there is something wrong in the way you do these things. You know, I'll tell you, other people won't tell you, but there it is. And it's wonderful if you can have an elder brother in a church who tells another person, you know, brother, I think you're very abrasive in the way you speak.

You make a lot of enemies, the way you do it. I mean, you've got to tone that down a little bit. Or another person may say, another situation, one elder may say, brother, you are just a compromiser.

You just want to please everybody in the church. Or you're partial. That's not right.

You know, we need to help one another. And we are afraid to say these things because we are afraid our fellowship will break. Then it is pathetic.

You know, like a newly married couple, they have a period called the honeymoon. In the honeymoon, they'll never say anything wrong about each other. Ah, you're so nice, and everything is so beautiful, and you're so pretty, you're perfect.

How am I, darling? You're perfect, honey, etc. That goes on for a period. But that's all deception.

I mean, that's because we don't know each other. You may love each other, but it's an unproven love. But show me a couple that have really loved each other for 30 years, been honest with each other.

They're not afraid to tell the truth to each other. They're not afraid, oh, they'll divorce me. She'll divorce me or he'll divorce me.

No. It's a proven love. We can help one another.

That's the relationship we must have in the church. And that's what protects us from deception. Because that person sees something which I don't see.

And if I'm humble enough to accept it, I can be protected from deception. So, these missing things in different churches, including ours, don't think we can exclude ours. There is no perfect church on the face of the earth.

And ours also may lack something. So, as I said, just because some church, some part of India is linked to us, doesn't mean that's a spiritual church. And shall I surprise you by telling you something? You'll get a big surprise when you hear this.

When some brother from Bangalore is transferred to another place, and we have a church in that place. You know what I tell him? I tell him, we have a church there. You can go there.

But if you find that church doesn't help you to grow spiritually and become a disciple of Jesus, and you find another church there, maybe another Pentecostal church or a charismatic church, where you find the pastor, maybe they don't have the correct pattern like we have, but the pastor there is a God-fearing man, challenges you to be a disciple. Brother, don't go to the church connected with CFC. Go to that church.

I'll tell you, I say that publicly. My loyalty is not to CFC. My loyalty is to Jesus Christ.

And if in a particular town, one church related to us is worldly, and some brother goes there and says, well, that's a worldly church, I don't want to go there, and he finds another church better than that, I say, go there. I won't stop you. I'm not here to sponsor and support worldly elders just because they are connected with CFC.

I want people to be disciples of Jesus. I don't want them to be connected to us in some type of denominational relationship. I'm against denominations.

I finished with denominations years ago, and I want to tell you, if CFC becomes a denomination, I'll have nothing to do with it. We're interested in building local churches. We have fellowship, but we're not a denomination.

Denominations get corrupt. You know, that's how Methodist church, you know what happened to it, Presbyterian church, you know what happened to it, Catholic church, the whole thing gets the sickness if it's a denomination. But you look at the churches in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3, church in

Ephesus, church in Teatira, church in Pergamos, Myrna, Philadelphia, Laodicea, they're all within, if you look at a map at the back of your Bible, you'll see they're all within about 30, 40 kilometers of each other.

Very close by. I mean, it's closer than from here to Kolar. 40, 50 kilometers of each other, but they're not one denomination.

If they were one denomination, the Lord would have told John, just write a letter to the bishop of that denomination and ask him to circulate it to all the seven churches because they're all in the same condition. No. To each church, give this message because the condition of each church is different.

Each elder is in a different condition. Even though they're 40 kilometers from each other, here was one church utterly worldly. They had lost their first love.

God was about to remove their being even called a church, Ephesus. Here was another church which was worldly, rich, plenty of money, but worldly, dead, wretched. The Lord was about to reject that.

And 40 miles of kilometers away was another church, Philadelphia, wholehearted, radical. So supposing some, and you know, in those days, there was only one church in each place. But when the church in Ephesus, when God, if they did not take God's word and they finally did not repent, the elder did not repent, the church may have 500, 600 people and they didn't repent.

The Lord said, I will remove the candlestick from you. I'll remove the lampstand and then it's no longer a church in God's eyes. The Lord said there were a few overcomers there.

To every church, he said, him who overcomes. In every dead church, there'll be some overcomers. Not every dead church, but in many dead churches, there could be an overcomer.

Even in Laodicea, the Lord spoke to the overcomers. So let's take Ephesus. There were some overcomers there.

What would the overcomers do when Jesus has left the church? Will they stay there? No. I won't stay in a church where Jesus is left. No.

The church in Laodicea, in Revelation chapter 3, do you know what the Lord said to that church? In Revelation chapter 3 verse 20, I stand at the door and knock. So where is he? Outside or inside? Outside. But what are they singing inside? Lord, thank you, two or three are gathered together in your name.

We are here and you're here. He wasn't there. Just because you quote that verse, he's outside.

And it's very easy for the Lord to go outside your church. Even if you're connected with CFC. The Lord's not connected with CFC.

The Lord's connected with people who love him. I remember hearing of, I don't know whether it was John Wesley, but somebody, there's a story that he went to heaven in a dream. And he asked the angel at the gate, do you have any Catholics here? No.

Do you have any Baptists here? Do you have any Presbyterians? No. Do you have any Methodists? That's the church he started. He said no.

He got a shock. No Methodists here in heaven? Then who do you have here? Just a few people who love the Lord. Then he went to the gates of hell and asked the demon there, do you have any Catholics? Oh, plenty of them.

Do you have Methodists? Plenty of them. Methodists also plenty of them? Oh yeah. Do you have anybody here who loves the Lord? Not even one.

Do you know that the Lord is not connected with any denomination? And it's very important for us to remember that. Just because maybe you have an elder brother who's radical, wholehearted, God-fearing, that doesn't mean every church connected to CFC is like that. Forty miles away may be a church just like Laodicea, connected to CFC, that come for the conference, but dead like anything which God one day will reject.

And there's no use saying to God in that day, but Lord, we went to the conferences. We were connected with CFC. The Lord says it makes no difference.

We need to understand the principle of the local church. Jesus stands in the midst of a local church. And the church in Bangalore, it's a condition the Lord knows.

The church in different, different parts of places, God knows the condition. One may be spiritual. Another, 40 kilometers away, belonging to the same group, may be absolutely dead.

And it all depends on the leader. And so God protects us, each local church, by giving good leadership. You know, the church in Ephesus was a wonderful church as long as Paul was there.

When Paul was there, they did not leave their first love. They really loved the Lord. The wolves were outside.

There was no problem there. It was a wonderful church. But once Paul left, he told them, he said, I know what's going to happen when I leave.

This church is going to go to the dogs. The wolves are going to come in. Because I know that none of you elders, I've observed you fellas for three years.

None of you have the ability to keep those wolves outside. You all love yourselves. You seek your own.

You're compromisers. You're not strict at the door. And when you're not strict at the door, the wolves get right in.

And it's through your gentleness and kindness that those wolves will come in. And those wolves will destroy your church. And it'll be too late before they would have come and destroyed the church.

And then you'll wake up and realize it. So, that's happened in many, many churches. There are people who come in.

And in places where there are mission compounds, people have come in and occupied their buildings. And they won't go out. And finally, you have a court case trying to get the person out of the mission compound.

That hasn't happened yet in any of our meeting places. But it can happen. All it needs is an elder who is a careless doorkeeper.

And all types of people creep in unnoticed. So, how do these things get missing in our churches? How is it that one church connected to CFC doesn't have certain things missing, another church connected to CFC has those things missing? It depends on how God-fearing the elder is. And if we are honest when God shows us something, instead of imagining that, of course, everything is okay with us, it's not.

You know, you can say, well, we're connected with Brother Zach. He gives us words that protect us. You know what John the Baptist said to the Jewish people in Matthew 3, verse 9? Don't say we have Abraham for our father.

Don't say we are connected to Abraham. It means nothing to God. He says, you are a generation of vipers.

And verse 7, even though you say you're connected to Abraham. You can be connected to any man of God in the world. And it doesn't make a difference to your life.

I have seen churches, I've been in churches, that claimed a connection with some godly man, and the church was corrupt as anything. Those elders were corrupt as anything. It's an individual thing.

No respect of persons. Don't think that because you're invited to a conference, because you're linked with CFC, therefore, everything is okay with you. That's the most dangerous thought that can come into your mind.

Everything is not okay. Everything is not okay even with you as an elder brother. You have to walk with God.

And let me come to this. If you want to be protected from deception, there's one very important condition. You have to love the truth about yourself.

When the Holy Spirit shows you some truth about yourself, in some situation, that there you were selfish, there you loved money, there you sought your own, there you were partial to a brother or a sister, there you disciplined somebody because you did not like his face, because of a spiritual reason, or you treated somebody badly because your wife told you something about him or her, and your mind was influenced by what your wife said, or your children couldn't get along with his children, and therefore you also had a problem with that person, because you listened to your children. Are you a man of God? Or a politician? We have so many politicians in churches. And when God shows you something, admit it! Don't ever say, Oh, no, no, no, I'm not.

That's the way to destroy yourselves. Admit it. There's corruption in our flesh.

Paul said, In my flesh dwells no good thing. And I want to say to all of you, remember Romans 7.18, In my flesh dwells no good thing, and none of us have got rid of our flesh yet. So we have to acknowledge the possibility that there could be wrong, un-Christlike attitudes, even in some of us who think we are very spiritual, and of course we never do such things.

You see, if you say you have no love of money, you know what will happen? You will never get victory over the love of money. You'll remain in deception all your life. And God may have shown you in some

particular situation that there you love money, but you won't face up to it.

Or in some other situation, God may show you there you had partiality, but you won't face up to it. God dooms you never to get light on your partiality all your life, till you stand at the judgment seat of Christ and discover how horribly partial you were. It's much better to acknowledge it now.

It could be some selfishness somewhere. And the Lord points it out to you and says, No, no, no, I wasn't selfish. I was acting in the interest of the glory of God.

Aha, okay. You are doomed never to discover the selfishness in your flesh for the rest of your life, because God showed you something and you would not acknowledge it. Let me show you that verse, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. This is how we miss certain sections of Scripture, and then if you are a leader, it gets missing in your church as well.

2 Thessalonians chapter 2 we read, it says here about the last days, it's talking about the coming of Jesus Christ in the first verse, and the days immediately preceding it. And it says in verse 3, Don't be deceived, before that day, two things are to happen before Jesus comes again. One is, many Christians are going to fall away from the true faith.

That doesn't mean they'll denounce Jesus Christ, no. They will not seek a gospel of holiness, they'll seek a gospel of earthly prosperity. That is a falling away.

It definitely is a falling away, if you are more interested in holiness, if you are more interested in money than in holiness, if you are more interested in healing from physical sickness, than you are from deliverance from sin, you have already fallen away. You may not realize it, but it is a falling away. And I see all around me Christians have fallen away from the gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached.

Now if you don't believe me, take some time to read the New Testament, and read the gospels, and read the epistles, and see how much did Jesus and the apostles teach people how they could become materially rich. Show me one verse. You don't have to show me two or three, show me one.

And show me how many sermons they preached on physical healing. Shall I surprise you? That Jesus never preached a single sermon on physical healing? People ask me, my brother Zach, why don't you preach on physical healing? I say, show me one sermon Jesus preached on physical healing. Then I'll do that.

Not even one. He healed thousands. But he never preached one sermon on healing.

Today we have thousands of sermons and books on healing, and very few people really healed. It's a deception what's going on. Those who have the gift of healing will heal the sick.

They won't preach sermons on it. Those who have the gift of miracles will do miracles. They won't preach sermons about it.

This is the deception going on today in the world. And multitudes of Christians sit there with their mouths open and they are thoroughly fooled by all this. I'm not fooled.

I see through the whole thing. It's deception. And I'll tell you something.

If you want to know how I got light, personally I haven't got light on everything, but how I got the little bit of light I have, which I have shared with you in these last 31 years, it is through one reason. Whenever God has shown me anything about myself, corruption in my flesh, I've said, yes, Lord, it's true. I have never, never tried to justify myself and say, no, no, no, no, no, it was not because of that.

Sometimes God has shown me that thing about myself in my relationship with other people. Sometimes I've seen selfishness in myself, in my relationship with my wife. And the Lord says, that was very selfish, the way you did that or didn't do that.

And I say, yes, Lord, absolutely right. Sometimes it's been in relation with my fellow elders and other brothers, I get light on myself and I say, Lord, that's right. I got some light in that situation.

God is my witness that for 30 years I have loved the truth about myself. And God has protected me from a lot of deception. He's given me light on the areas where people are being deceived left, right and center in Christendom today.

You can get that light too. God is not partial. He does not love me more than He loves you.

He'll give you the same light if you love the truth about yourself when God shows it to you. And don't try to justify yourself. So it says here in the last days, there'll be first a great falling away and second the Antichrist will arise in verse 4. And then it says, there's going to be so much deception in those days.

He calls it in verse 9, the last part, false wonders. How do you distinguish between a true miracle and a false miracle? If you don't love the truth about yourself, you will not be able to distinguish it. You'll see a false miracle and you'll sit there with your mouth open and say, boy, in the name of Jesus, that fellow did that.

And you forget that there are people who do miracles in the name of Jesus who will one day stand before the Lord and the Lord will send them to hell saying, I don't know you. False miracles. And he says the thing is the deception of wickedness, verse 10.

The reason for the deception is, listen to this, verse 10, they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. Saved from what? Not from hell. To be saved from everything unchristlike in their life.

How many of you are interested in being saved from every single unchristlike attitude, behavior, speech in your life? I am. I raise my hand without any fear to God and say, Lord, I'm interested in being saved from every single smallest teeny-weeny little unchristlikeness in my life. In speech, in thought, in attitude, in the way I look, the way I think, the way everything.

Give me light. I will acknowledge it. I will never justify myself.

And God has been very, very good to me. To me, this is one of the marks of God's love for me that he gives me light on myself. In fact, if I went through one day one day in a year without getting light on myself, I'd call myself a backslider.

That's my standard. I don't know what your standard of backsliding is. But for myself, I have kept this as my standard of backsliding.

If I go by one day in my life without discovering some unchristlikeness in my life in some situation, I say, Lord, I've started backsliding. Please protect me. I don't want to go any further.

One day went by and backsliding has started. I didn't get any light on myself yesterday. I went through the whole day imagining that I was as holy as Jesus himself.

Oh, what a deception. Lord, what happened? I'm in darkness. Give me light.

That bothers me. I don't have to go and watch pornography to say I'm a backslider. Just light on little spiritual pride was there and I didn't get light on it.

Sometimes something happens and I get a little proud about it and I discover it five minutes later. Oh, I say, Lord, five minutes. It took me five minutes to discover that pride.

Lord, please save me. This is terrible. Imagine me getting a thorn in my foot and my discovering it five minutes later.

Wouldn't you think that's serious? If you got a thorn in your foot and you discover it after five minutes, you get a little pain. How is your body supposed to respond? You put your hand on a hot stove. Five minutes later, oh, it's hot.

No, it's immediate. I want my conscience to be like that. That is, there's pride somewhere, impurity somewhere, selfishness.

Immediate reaction. Do you want that in your life? How many of you are eager for that? Are you eager just to come for conferences? Are you eager just to get knowledge? Or do you want this type of reaction to sin that as soon as you touch it, you say, hey, that's hot. I don't want to touch that.

That's a thorn that got in there. We take such care of our bodies. We don't want our hands to burn.

We don't want our feet to get infected. What about our soul? Love the truth about yourself in order to be, from every unchrist-like attitude, thought, word, action in your life. Especially at home and in our relationship with our fellow believers.

Why did Jesus say, all men will know you are my disciples, not when you love them. Now, if we were saying that word, we would have, our logic says, people will know you are disciples of Jesus when you love them. God says, my ways are not your ways.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. He says something completely different which doesn't seem to fit with our thinking. You tell me logically, isn't it when you love somebody that he sees that you are Christ-like? That you are a disciple of Jesus? Isn't that how your brain works? That's how my brain works.

That if I love somebody and show love to him, he'll see I'm a disciple of Christ. Jesus has nothing doing. I humble myself and say, I accept your thoughts.

I humble myself. I accept your word that that fellow will know we are disciples of Jesus, not when I love him, but when I love my fellow believers in the local church. Now, you can see the reality of it.

Let me ask you who have been in your churches for many years. Many of you have been in CFC Bangalore for many years. Tell me honestly, don't tell me, isn't it more difficult for you to love some brother in your own church than some brother in another denomination? Don't you have a bigger struggle with some sister in your own church than some other sister in some other denomination who may be an absolute compromiser, but you're so happy to greet them, but some sister in this church, long face.

The problem is here. You husbands, if a stranger comes to your door, long face, it's the people whom we call loved ones whom we don't love. It's a deception.

Familiarity breeds contempt. We don't value the elders in our local church. It's true.

If you don't value the elders in your local church, it's because you become so familiar with them that you don't realize their value. People in a hundred other churches may realize their value a million times more than you do, and they get blessed. You don't realize their value, and you're the loser.

There's a lot of contempt that has come out of familiarity in Christendom, and I am very careful with that. I don't want to ever get so familiar with a person that I stop valuing him and respecting him as a brother. That's not for your salvation.

It's for my salvation. If I say that I treat him with contempt, I'm going to be the loser, not him. Do you think if you treat me with contempt, I'll be the loser? Not in a million years.

You'll be the loser. It's true. So, Jesus says, when you love one another, you demonstrate that you're my disciples, because it's very difficult to love the person whom you see regularly.

It's true. Husbands and wives talk courteously to one another, but they have no problem talking courteously to other people whom they see only once in a while. And our love is not tested with the people you see once in a while.

It's the people you see regularly. And I want to tell you, my brothers, sisters, if you have wonderful fellowship with people from some other church in India, it proves nothing. I want to know your relationship with the sisters and brothers in your own church whom you see regularly, etc.

That's the test. And when you see that about yourself, and you say, oh no, that's because that sister is like that and that brother is like that, you have justified yourself. Do you know who are the people who justify themselves? Jesus said in Luke 16, 15, you are those who justify yourselves, he told the Pharisees.

That's why they could never be saved. And I've learned something from that. Anyone who justifies himself or herself is in the same category.

So I decided before God that I would never justify myself. If I find it difficult to love a brother in my own church, I will go to God and say, Lord, I don't know, something is wrong with me. Something is wrong with me.

It's not with that other person. Something is wrong with me that I cannot love that person whom I see regularly in my own home church. And I can love that total stranger who is in another denomination.

Something is seriously wrong with me. Please save me. I love the truth about myself so as to be saved.

What is the result? I'm not only saved, but I'm protected from deception because it goes on to say, this deception comes on all, the deception of wickedness comes, verse 10, because they did not receive the love of the truth to be saved and God himself, for this reason, the reason is given, the reason is, they did not receive the love of the truth about themselves to be saved for this reason, God himself will deceive them. Do you know, my brothers and sisters, I have seen in people in CFC, I'm absolutely convinced that God has deceived them. You may not think so.

I don't know some of you in other churches so well, but I know a number of people in CFC, I know God has deceived them when they are spiritual, when they are not spiritual. Some of them, God has even deceived them to think they are born again when they are not born again. And if I go and tell them they are not born again, they'll say, ah, Fr.

Jack is prejudiced against me. I hope you won't get a surprise at the judgment seat of Christ. Your blood is not on my hands.

But I'm absolutely convinced in my mind that God has blinded and deceived some people who sat in CFC for the reason that when God shows them something about themselves, they justify themselves. That is the surest way to live in perpetual deception. Large sections of your Bible will be torn out, and you will think you are a wonderful spiritual person when you are not.

I'll tell you something. We don't have to be bothered about the opinions of men. That's true.

No man is going to sit on the judgment seat of Christ and judge you. It's only Jesus himself. But I'll tell you something.

If a godly man told me something about myself, I would take that opinion very seriously. There are very few such people, but if one of them said something to me, I would take it very seriously. And I've had occasions like that where I thought I was okay, and some very godly brother whom I respected, not in our churches, but sometimes outside of our churches, somewhere, some country, somewhere, would tell me something, and that would give me light, and I would take it.

And that has protected me. I don't say, well, I don't care for man's opinion. I'd destroy myself if I do that.

I want to ask you, my brother, sister, can you honestly stand before God and say, I love the truth about myself, Lord. I want to be saved from every single unchrist-like thing in my life. If you can honestly say that before God every single day, it will be a battle.

I guarantee, in the name of Jesus Christ, the devil will not be able to deceive you even 1% in any area. Not even 1%. You'll have a full Bible.

You will not be deceived in any area. If you are not born again, you'll know that. If you are not spiritual, you'll know that.

Because the first step is to know our condition. Do you know why the Pharisees could not be saved? Did Jesus die for Pharisees, yes or no? Yes. Why couldn't they be saved then? Because they would not admit their sin.

He was very sarcastic. He looked at these Pharisees and said, Oh, you fellows are so healthy, you don't need a doctor, do you? Let me go to these sick people, these prostitutes and thieves and all. They are the sick ones.

I came for them. I didn't come for all you healthy people who sit there. You think Jesus wasn't sarcastic when he said, I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance? You people need a doctor, right? You people are not sick.

When I tell you about some sickness, you say, no, I don't have that sickness. Then you're all healthy people. Please live your life.

And those are the fellows Jesus said who went to hell first. It's happening today. There are Pharisees sitting in our churches who are on their way to hell.

They won't believe it because they've been deceived into thinking everything is okay. Don't, you know, I came to the CFC and to be lost today. There are cases like that.

I know with my own eyes. I've seen people who came in, they were genuinely saved. And some years later, it was clear to me they were lost.

We have to live in fear. Our only protection is if God himself gives us light. And if God himself starts deceiving me like it says in verse 11, what will happen? Little by little, I'm going to go away because whole sections of truth are not being revealed to me because God is blinding us.

The devil is already blinding us. Deceitfulness comes through many ways. Let me show you Ephesians 4. Let me just show you some things that deceive us.

Ephesians 4, 22. In the last part, it speaks about the lusts of deceit or deceitful lusts. Do you know that the wrong desires are deceitful? Deceitful means they give you the feeling there's nothing wrong in indulging them.

Giving in to them is not so serious. Giving in to a little bit of anger, your lusts say, that's not serious, man. We all get angry, right? And you say, that's right.

Your lusts have deceived you. I guarantee in 50 years you won't get victory over it because it's not serious. Or your lusts with your eyes or some other sin like that and your lusts say, that's not serious.

I mean, everybody does that. And you don't take it seriously, your lusts have succeeded in deceiving you. Lusts have a tremendous ability to deceive you and to make you think that sin is not serious.

And that's why you play the fool with it. Do you know the number of born-again believers in pornography? Don't you think such people have been completely deceived by their lusts? I mean, you just got to ask yourself, would Jesus click on that site and go and watch it? That's the answer. But at that moment, their lusts have deceived them.

You don't look at Jesus, you just think about yourself now. Their lusts have deceived them. You've got to recognize that the lusts in your flesh are a chronic liar.

Will you believe what he says? Your lusts are like that. They are liars. Another verse I want to show you is Mark chapter 4. Mark chapter 4, verse 19 we read.

This is the parable of the sower where Jesus said that about the thorns that grew up and choked the seed. He said, the thorns are the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. Do you know that riches are deceitful? You can see it all over Christendom.

People think that God has blessed them when they become rich. That is the greatest deception of all. If that is the case, I'll tell you who is the most spiritual man in the world.

Bill Gates. I'll tell you who is the second most spiritual man in the world. You just go to Fortune and magazine and you get a list of all the people who are the most spiritual people in the world.

And the sheiks and the king of Brunei. These are some of the most spiritual people in the world. Do you know the number of Christians who think that riches means God has blessed them? Even young people sitting here.

Brother, do you know what salary God gave me? The deceitfulness of riches. It means nothing. How much did Paul earn from his tent making? Did God bless him or not? Don't be deceived that because you managed to build a good house, God blessed you.

These are little crumbs that fall from the table. Have you got the bread? That's what I want to know. Don't glory in the crumbs.

You're not a dog to sit there and say, I got a crumb. My salary is 50,000 rupees. I built a house of my own.

Another crumb. Are you a dog? What about the bread on the table? How much have you partaken of God's nature in your life? That's the mark of God's blessing. The deceitfulness of riches.

I have seen people who came to this church poor. Dirt poor. We taught them to honor God.

God honored them, blessed them. Their children got good jobs. And the deceitfulness of riches took over the family.

They thought God blessed them. How blind can you be? And many of them, their children lose out spiritually but they got money. Many of them I warned but they won't listen to my warning because the deceitfulness of riches is so powerful.

God has blessed me. What is this warning Brother Zack is giving? Okay. I have nothing more to say.

Let me show you another thing. In Colossians chapter 2, another form of deception which is very prevalent in the world today is the deception that comes through what I call religious asceticism. That means you pray a lot you fast a lot.

A lot of churches who major on prayer, all night prayer, fasting and they think they are very spiritual. The deception of religious asceticism I fasted for 10 days, I fasted for 21 days, etc., etc. It says in Colossians chapter 2 about such religious asceticism.

You know, if you submit yourself to rules it says in verse 20 last part such as don't handle, don't taste, don't touch in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men these are matters which give you the illusion of being very holy, very humble but they are just another way of showing off and making yourself look very important in religious circles by people who don't have discernment. I'm not fooled by somebody who says he fasted even for 40 days. I want to see whether he behaves like Jesus.

I'd rather fellowship with a man who didn't fast at all and was like Jesus than somebody who fasted for 40 days and who's got so many unchrist-likenesses in his habit, in his life and who loves money. Deception. There's tremendous amount of deception and the most humorous thing of all is when these fat pastors tell us that they fasted for 40 days.

There's something funny about their metabolism that they fast for 40 days and they're still so huge. Liars. Deceivers.

Don't be fooled by all this. Religious asceticism. Some people have it.

They think that the more they boast about how much they pray and how much... Jesus said when you pray don't let anybody know about it. When you fast don't let anybody know about it. When you give, when you sacrifice don't let anybody know about it.

Don't let anybody know. These must all be in secret before God and your father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Everybody will see that you're a godly man.

You don't have to talk about how long you fasted and how much money you gave and how much you sacrificed. No. The deception of religious asceticism which have an appearance of being very pious.

You know, I've met people like that who talk very pious language. I'm not fooled by it at all. Don't be fooled yourself.

1 Timothy 4 it says that in... the Spirit says in the last days many people will be deceived by the doctrines of demons they'll think that if they don't get married they'll be more spiritual. That is another deception some people have. If I don't get married I'll be more spiritual.

It's not true. Or if I eat vegetarian food I'll be more spiritual. Or if I become a full-time worker I'll be more spiritual.

No. I've met unmarried single people who are some of the most carnal people on earth. I've met full-time workers who are some of the most carnal Christians I've ever met in my life.

These are not the ways to become spiritual. The way to become spiritual this is 1 Timothy 4 verse 1 I'm reading is in the previous verse 1 Timothy 3 verse 16 The secret of godliness is in Jesus who came in our flesh and never sinned. It's not in avoiding certain types of food or avoiding marriage or being a full-time worker.

Jesus was as spiritual as a carpenter as when he was a full-time worker. He didn't become more spiritual when he became a full-time worker. And we already saw the deception that comes through false miracles.

So all these things combine to deceive us and we shall be saved I told you by loving the truth about ourselves and I want to show you one more thing that helps us to be saved from deception. And that is in Hebrews in chapter 3 and verse 13. Here it speaks about the deceitfulness of sin.

How can I be saved from the deceitfulness of sin? I want to be saved from the deceitfulness of sin and first we saw I'm really telling you two things. One is love the truth about yourself whenever the Holy Spirit shows you. Whenever you see some truth in the scripture love that truth.

Acknowledge that you don't have it. Obey it. Here is the second thing.

Open yourself to be exhorted by other members of the body of Christ. Don't think I can take care of myself. I can't.

You know I read books by Anglican believers by old Roman Catholic saints. I read books by Mother Teresa. I don't agree with her doctrines but if she says something that can give me light on my selfishness I thank God for it.

I don't care where it comes from. I read magazines like missionary magazines of Friends Missionary prayer band. I don't agree with all that doctrines of the CSI church and all those churches some of those

people and it doesn't matter but I get light when I see the sacrificial way some of these people are living for God for my savior in North India.

I get light on myself. I get light on my selfishness and I thank God I have decided I will be open to every God-fearing member of the body of Christ. I don't care what denomination they're in because I know Babylon is not in one denomination.

I know Jerusalem is not in one denomination. It's here and there and there and as I open myself to all of God's people in different places I get light on myself. I'm saved from the deceitfulness of sin.

It says let us exhort one another encourage one another lest you become hardened. I don't want to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and the only way is to allow myself to be encouraged and exhorted by others. And I thank God that I can read the English language.

I can be exhorted by many people in many many places. I feel sorry for Christians who don't read. We have a generation of people today who don't read.

It's very sad. You're going to be the loser. Read the scriptures.

Open yourself to God-fearing people. I don't mean everybody here and there. There are a lot of books that are trash.

But when I read a book I want to see does it speak to my heart? Does this author speak to my heart? I want to read more of him. If I hear a CD of one particular brother I don't care where he's from speaks to my heart I will keep on listening to such CDs of such a person. I will keep on reading books by such a person.

I read very very few. I don't have time to read all the rubbish that's going on in Christendom today. I want to expose myself to that which will save me from being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin because my goal in my life is to become totally like Jesus Christ.

I hope that is your goal too. So when we think of the messages that are missing in today's Christianity remember we are also included in today's Christianity. There could be things missing in our church and there are.

There could be things missing in our life and there are. It's good to discover them. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father help us to walk in the light as you are in the light and to get light that we can cleanse ourselves and present ourselves to you as a vessel of honor fit for the Master's use because we have cleansed ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and spirit. We have purified ourselves pursuing that purity which you have. We have pressed on to perfection.

Lord give us low thoughts about ourselves. Help us to realize that we are nobodies. Especially anybody here who thinks he is a somebody please give him light to realize he is a nobody.

Help us all to realize we are nobodies but we can bless one another. In Jesus name.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-missing-messages-in-todays-christianity-7-being-protected-from-deception-our/>

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