

Watch Your Inner Life

by Zac Poonen

Your inner life before God is the most important thing, and God judges the heart, not outward appearance.

Duration: 30:08

Scripture: Genesis 39:7-10, 1 Samuel 16:7, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Isaiah 11:2, Matthew 5:20-23, 1 Corinthians 4:5

Topics: "Inner Transformation", "Heart Purity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of the inner life before God, highlighting how God looks at the heart while man looks at the outward appearance. It contrasts the Old Testament focus on external actions with the New Testament emphasis on inward transformation. Jesus teaches that true righteousness surpasses external religious practices and requires purity of heart. The message warns against sins of the heart like anger and lust, stressing the need for genuine repentance and a deep reverence for God's holiness.

Transcript

If there is one thing that you can be gripped by, and that is that your inner life before God is the most important thing. There is a great verse in the Old Testament, which I want to read to you. I hope you'll never forget it.

It's in 1 Samuel 16, verse 7. It's one of the most important verses in the Old Testament. I don't know whether every believer believes it. It says in 1 Samuel 16, verse 7, the last part, man looks at the outward appearance, and God looks at the heart.

I want to say to you that if you can be gripped by this one thing, people look at you on the outside, God looks at you on the inside. What you appear on the outside doesn't matter to God at all, because He's always looking on the inside. The sad thing in the Old Covenant was that they could not do anything about the inside.

All the law was on the outside. Don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't hurt others, and everything, the entire law was on the outside, and the blessings were also on the outside. You know, property and land, and we can say that the Old Testament was an outward religion, and the New Testament is inward.

So when people who call themselves Christians are taken up with the outward more than the inward, we can say that such Christians have gone back to Old Testament living. They've completely missed out on

what Jesus came to give and teach. If you turn to Matthew chapter 5, I'm sure you all know this verse, Matthew 5 and verse 20.

How shall we enter the kingdom of heaven? I mean, this is what we are supposed to be preaching the gospel is how to enter the kingdom of heaven, and listen to the words of Jesus himself. I say to you, unless your righteousness surpasses, that means goes beyond the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. The Pharisee, when he prayed in the temple, spoke of his righteousness.

I pray three times a day, I fast twice a week, I pay tithes, everything was external. I do this, I do that, I do the other thing. Jesus said that's not good enough.

Your righteousness must be more than the righteousness of Pharisees. And whenever, you know, as human beings, when we hear the word more, we always think of quantity. They fasted three times a day, we must fast twice a week, we must fast three times a week.

They prayed three times a day, we must pray five times a day. No, it's more in terms of quality. The Pharisee's righteousness was a quantity.

Yours must be more than that in quality. That's the meaning. The Pharisee's righteousness was outward, yours must be inward.

Otherwise, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. I want to say to all of you who are here, 1800 people, I want to say to you in Jesus name. I'm just reading the words of Jesus.

If your righteousness, whatever you think is your righteousness, remains like the righteousness of the Pharisees on the outside, you read the Bible, you go to church, you give some money, you sing songs, you say you have accepted Christ, it's all on the outside. And the inside is dirty. You will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Heaven and earth will pass away. These words will not pass away. And I want to say to you in Jesus name, concentrate on the inside.

Don't worry about the outside. And after Jesus said these words, your righteousness must be more than the righteousness of the Pharisees. He said, okay, I will now explain it to you.

That's what he said in the next verse. Pharisees said, don't commit murder. I say, don't get angry.

Murder is on the outside. Anger is on the inside. You see what he was saying? The righteousness of the Pharisees was you don't commit murder.

Your righteousness must be more than that, that you don't get angry. So if you just avoid murder, and you keep on getting angry, I want to tell you the truth. You will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

It's because we teach things like this that people call us heretics and false teachers. They can call us what they like. But I say heaven and earth will not pass away.

But these words of Jesus will not pass away. Who said in Matthew 522, whoever is angry with his brother is guilty. And if he speaks to his brother, some angry word, he's guilty before the Supreme Court.

And if he goes further and says something even worse, he is guilty enough to go to hell. Do you know how anger proceeds? Anger starts in the heart. Ecclesiastes says, Ecclesiastes 7.9 I think it is, anger dwells in the heart of a fool.

Any of you who got anger in your heart, according to the Bible, it's a fool who's got anger in his heart. A wise man gets rid of it immediately. The fool keeps it.

Any of you who've kept anger in your heart proves you're a fool. Now don't get angry with me. That's what the Holy Spirit says.

But when that anger comes out of your mouth in words, your wife, husband, neighbor, brother, somebody, maybe an auto rickshaw driver, you can get angry with all types of people, comes out of your mouth and then comes out with even more words, you are guilty enough to go to hell. Have you ever heard that preached in any church? I know brothers who have come to our church who said, Brother Zach, I never even knew anger was a sin till I came to your church. I say you had the Bible and you don't have to read far in the Bible to discover it.

You just got to get up to Matthew chapter 5 and you'll discover it. And what is Jesus explaining? Your righteousness must be more than the righteousness of the Pharisees to enter the kingdom of heaven. Just like we heard a little while ago, there are inward diseases which don't seem to have any outward symptom till you go for a blood test and you discover, hey, I've got cancer in my blood.

I've got some other disease in my blood. I never knew that. I felt perfectly okay.

That's how sin is. So Jesus said, watch the inside. Man looks on the outside.

God looks at the inside. Your righteousness must be more than the righteousness of the Pharisees. This is the whole purpose of God.

Part of the whole purpose of God that we've been proclaiming for 41 years. That man looks on the outside, God looks on the inside. That the inside is more important than the outside.

And then Jesus said, I'll give you one more example. The righteousness of the Pharisees is don't commit adultery on the outside. Verse 27, but I say to you, if you're inside, you look at a woman and you don't touch her.

You don't go near her. You don't talk to her. You just look at her and say, boy, I wish I could get into bed with her.

You have already done it. And all these people who click on the computer screen and watch pornography, young people, married people watching pornography. Do you know 60, 70% of born again believers watch pornography? Yeah.

There are surveys that people have done. You know, in the survey, you can be anonymous. You don't give your name and they speak the truth.

And I get lots of emails from young people, believers. And because in an email, you can be totally anonymous. You don't even know which country they're writing from, who they are, whether they are 50 years old or 15 years old.

Nobody knows. They are very honest. You know, the number of emails I get, brother Zach, I've accepted the Lord, but I'm just a slave to pornography.

I mean, they're not not not getting any physical satisfaction. It's not like having actual adultery where you actually get some sort of sexual pleasure. This is you're not getting any satisfaction.

You're just watching something and it's going into your mind and you're getting excited about it. What a fool the devil has made of people. They're not even getting any pleasure out of it.

And they watch it and watch it and watch it. And there is no fear of God before their eyes. That's what God is watching.

When you are watching that computer screen. You know who all are. Your parents are not there.

The room is locked. But there are demons there. Aha.

There are angels there. We're sad. The Holy Spirit is there.

You're a believer. And the devil is going up to God. He's called the accuser of the brethren.

He says, God, see that fellow there? He claims to be your child. He goes to CFC. You hear that? You see what he's watching? You see what he sings on Sunday morning? God, is that your child? And now there are even women watching it.

Believe it or not. How perverse man has become. But women are starting watching pornography.

Crazy. Men have a natural sexual desire. When a woman has a crazy sexual desire, she's close to a prostitute.

Something seriously wrong. And it's because of the culture we live in. It's coming into our mind and polluting us.

Brothers and sisters, fight it. God has raised up CFC to urge people to fight it. We can't change people.

But we can warn people. People say, oh, don't frighten us, brother Zach. You think Jesus was frightening you when he said, if you get angry, you can go to hell.

If you lust after a woman, it says, if you don't pull out your eye, you can go to hell. It's better to lose your eye than he said, be thrown into hell. Verse 29.

And sexual sin with your hand. He spoke about sexual sin with the eyes. And he spoke about sexual sin with your right hand.

Verse 30. Jesus doesn't use the embarrassing words, but you know what he means. He says, you can go to hell.

You believe that? What Jesus said. Why did he speak about the right hand in terms of sexual sin? In verse 30, it says, you can go to hell better to cut it off than go to hell with it. How many people take sexual sin seriously? People ask me sometimes, brother Zach, why do you speak so much against anger and sexually dirty thoughts and sexual sins and secret? I said, because in the entire Sermon on the Mount, there are only two places where Jesus said you can go to hell.

Only two sins. There are many other sins listed in Sermon on the Mount. Telling lies, divorcing, hating your neighbor.

That's a sin. Giving money to let other people see it. Praying in public to impress others.

That's a sin. Or fasting and letting everybody know about it. Loving money, being anxious, judging others.

So many things. Matthew 5, 6 and 7. But out of all these sins, he picks out two and said, they will send you to hell. If you pray and let other people know about it, you won't go to hell.

It's a sin. If you fast and advertise your fasting, it's a sin, but you won't go to hell. If you don't love your enemy, it's a sin, but you won't go to hell.

If you're anxious, that's a sin, but you won't go to hell. If you love money, that's a sin, but it may not take you to hell. But when it came to anger and dirty thoughts and lusting with your eyes and sinning with your hand, he said, that'll take you to hell.

You read Matthew 5 and 6 and 7, the Sermon on the Mount. The word hell comes only in these three places. Sin with your tongue, sin with your eyes, sin with your hands.

Secretly. The other people don't know. We use the same eyes to read the Bible, to read songs, to sing it.

We use the same tongue to speak words of God, words to God of praise and use the same tongue to get angry with people. We use the right hand to hold the Bible and then hold the right hand to commit sexual sin. I believe the words of Jesus.

And I'll tell you something, you don't need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to overcome these sins. There are lots of people who claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues who commit all these sins. Believe me.

There are Pentecostals, charismatics who get angry like anything, who commit sexual sin with their eyes, pornography and their hands and everything. Their speaking in tongues has not solved that problem for them. I'll tell you the example of a man who was not even born again, who did not know anything about Jesus Christ, who did not have a Bible, who was not filled with the Holy Spirit and who resisted at least adultery.

Joseph, young 20 year old man, far away from his parents, in a house where somebody was tempting him every day and he ran away. And I believe in those days, if there was pornography and there was a computer in front of him, Joseph would have run away from that too. What is it that made him run away? Not fullness of the Spirit.

He feared God. You know, when that woman tempted him, what he said, you read in Genesis 39, how can I sin against God? Read that verse. All of us must remember it.

Genesis chapter 39. When the woman came to Joseph with great desire, verse 7, looked at him with desire, Genesis 39, 7 and said, lie with me. A woman coming to a young muscular man.

Some of you are 20 years old, far away from your parents, just like Joseph. What would you do if you're all alone in the house and a very attractive woman says, come on, come on, nobody's here and you're supposed to be a CFC believer. What do you do? He says he refused.

Verse 8, he says in verse 9, how can I do, the last part, verse 9, how can I do this great evil and sin against God who is here? How do you say nobody's here? He tells 44, how do you say nobody's here? God is right here. Your husband is not here, my parents are not here, but God is right here. How can I sin against God? And it says, verse 10, day after day after day, she went after him.

Come on, come on, come on. Every day he would say, no, God is here, God is here, God is here. She thought he was crazy.

Which man would keep refusing a woman like that? I'll tell you, not one who speaks in tongues, but one who fears God. Speaking in tongues is not the beginning of wisdom. I speak in tongues, I'm not against it.

I've spoken in tongues for 41 years and I thank God for it. But that is not the beginning of wisdom. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

When the Holy Spirit came and filled me, he not only gave me the gift of tongues, he gave me a fear of God, the spirit. Isaiah 11, he's called the spirit of the fear of the Lord. You know him as the spirit of the fear of the Lord? It says in Isaiah 11 and verse 2, the spirit of the fear of the Lord rested upon Jesus.

And I say, that's the spirit, I want to rest upon me. And that's the real Holy Spirit. The spirit of the Lord is called in verse, Isaiah 11 to the spirit of the fear of the Lord.

That means a spirit that makes me reverence God. In the moment when I'm tempted to get angry, in the moment when I'm tempted to commit some secret sin, how can I do this? When God is here. God looks on the heart, man looks on the outward appearance.

When Jesus comes again and we stand at his judgment seat, we read in 1 Corinthians in chapter 4, what is it that God is going to judge? Not what you did in public, but what you did in private. 1 Corinthians 4, verse 5. Don't pass judgment on others. When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and the motives of people's hearts.

So when the Lord comes at the judgment seat, he's going to reveal all the things I did in darkness and all the things inside my heart. And we say, Lord, what about all the outward things? There's no need for that. No need.

I will just judge whatever this person did when nobody was watching him. I'll just judge the way he spoke to his wife when nobody else was in the house or the way she spoke to her husband when nobody else was there. I will judge what he thought in his heart when he was lying alone in his bed when nobody knew what was going on, when he was sitting alone in his house.

That's all I'm going to judge because I've written in my word, God says, man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. That's enough. We say, Lord, what about the outside? See what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23.

Matthew 23. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, verse 25. Matthew 23, verse 25.

You clean the outside of the cup, but the inside is filthy. Inside is full of self indulgence. Self indulgence means whatever self wants, you do it inside.

Outwardly all looking very clean. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the dish and after that clean the outside. No, no need to clean the outside.

Just clean the inside. Did you notice that? We would think that Jesus should say first clean the inside and then clean the outside. He says no.

Clean the inside and that's it. The outside will become automatically clean. If you cleanse your inside from anger, you'll never murder anybody.

If you cleanse your inside from lust, you'll never go and commit adultery. You don't need to cleanse the outside. That is why in the final day, he's not going to judge the outside, he's just going to judge the inside.

It says there, the Lord will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and the motives of men's hearts. This is the purpose of God that we proclaim. This is the part of the circle that others are not coloring, that we are coloring.

These are the colors of the rainbow that are not being proclaimed. So we don't get pure white. We get some orange or some green.

That's not white man. You got some of the colors of white but some things are missing. We want pure white and we want to put in the other colors of the rainbow that are missing.

That's what we proclaim. We don't guarantee that everybody in this church or in all of our CFC churches is living like this. But I'll tell you one thing.

I've said this to many people in the past years. If you listen to what we preach here and take it seriously, I guarantee you will get 100% on the day of judgment. Sometimes I shut my eyes and I use my imagination.

We've all used our imagination for many filthy things in our unconverted days. Why not use our imagination for some good things now that you're converted? So I shut my eyes and I imagine that Christ has come and he set up his judgment seat and one by one different names are being called to go and stand before him and the Lord looks at the video record of the person's life, of his inner life, a video of his thoughts, of what he did in private. There's no video of the outside.

Just this is enough and what goes on and judgment is passed. And then I picture my name being called and I stand before him and I know that those early years of my born-again experience were really bad but the Lord's blotted them out with his blood. Not only blotted them out, he says I won't remember it anymore.

But then the Lord looks at the rest of my life and he sees how I battled not to get a testimony before men. How I battled and fought and battled and fought in my thoughts to control my tongue and to control my attitudes and to control my motives and to see that I never seek man's honor, that I never desire anybody's money. All the inner motives and in my mind I picture the Lord saying to me, you're clean.

I have nothing against you. You will not be judged. You can go.

And I say Lord, that's what I want. I don't care if every man on earth calls me a heretic and a false prophet or call me the devil himself if they like. The only thing that matters is what you will say to me when I stand at your judgment seat.

And I will never live for the honor of men. I will never preach a message to impress anybody or to please anyone. And I want to gather people like that and build the body of Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, I hope you have the same desire. There's no partiality with God. It's the only thing worth building on earth.

The church consisting of people like this. We proclaim the whole purpose of God and therefore I'm innocent of the blood of all men. I can say with the Apostle Paul, let's bow our heads in prayer.

Please don't let this word go away from your heart. Don't let the devil rob you of that which is most important for your life. Don't just listen to it as another message.

Think that God brought you here just to listen to perhaps this message and say Lord have mercy on me. Please forgive my past and take me, take it, help me to take it seriously. Thank you Lord, Heavenly Father.

I can never preach Lord like I should. The way you hate sin, I pray that people will see it. Have mercy on us.

That which crucified you on the cross, we take so lightly. Teach us the fear of God. Pour out upon us the spirit of the fear of God.

We pray and we ask for nothing else. In Jesus name, Amen.

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