

Building the Body of Christ - 6 Loving the Truth

by Zac Poonen

Loving the truth is essential for salvation and spiritual growth, and deception can occur if we do not love the truth.

Duration: 57:29

Scripture: Matthew 19:6, Romans 3:3-4, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 3:2-3, 1 John 4:20

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity in relationships, both in marriage and within the church. It highlights the need for deep fellowship and love among believers, stressing that holiness should lead to stronger connections with others. The speaker warns against self-deception, especially in matters of faith and relationships, urging listeners to love the truth about themselves and seek continuous purification. The sermon also addresses the danger of deception by God, Satan, money, and personal lusts, emphasizing the need to align with God's truth and live in genuine fellowship with others.

Transcript

Yesterday I was saying how the greater work that we can do today which Jesus could not do was to make two people into one. And in the history of the world we can say that is the most difficult thing to do. As soon as Adam sinned against God, he was separated from Eve.

And when Jesus came to save us, he not only came to save us individually, but also to save us in our relationships with one another. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 19. The Pharisees came and asked Jesus, is it lawful, verse 3, for a man to divorce his wife? And then Jesus said, no, you know how it was from the beginning.

And he said these words, that verse 6, consequently they are no longer two, but one, and what God has joined together, nobody should separate. So those who are married know how difficult it is for two people to become one. Many people think that Christians are separated only on the basis of doctrine.

That means one church believes one doctrine and that is why another church pulls out because they have a different doctrine. But if you look at every church having the same doctrine, you find it very difficult for two people to become one. Within the church, for two people to become one who believe exactly the same

doctrine, or a husband and wife who believe exactly the same doctrine, it is difficult to become one.

Any holiness that we think we have, which does not lead to deeper fellowship with others, is a deception. We can think we are getting holier, but one test of it is that we will have more fellowship with other people who are also seeking to become holier. So if fellowship is not increasing, then we are living in a world of self-deception.

So if fellowship is not increasing, then we are living in a world of self-deception. That is what John says in 1 John chapter 4. It is good for us to see these scriptures so that we know that God himself says these things. Verse 20, if anyone says I love God and he hates his brother, he is a liar.

Verse 20, if anyone says I love God and he hates his brother, he is a liar. The Christian world is full of people who think they love God. The Christian world is full of people who think they love God.

They think like that, but it is not true. Because they can't love somebody else in their own church. They can't love somebody else in their own home.

And then it says, if you cannot love your brother, you cannot love God. Because this brother is someone you can see. Because this brother is someone you can see.

And if you can't love somebody you can see, how can you love somebody you cannot see? And if you can't love somebody you can see, how can you love somebody you cannot see? It is a very simple logic that John uses here. It is a very simple logic that John uses here. And if we keep this before our mind, we will never deceive ourselves.

And if we keep this before our mind, we will never deceive ourselves. That the test of my relationship with God is my relationship with my fellow believers. That the test of my relationship with God is my relationship with my fellow believers.

As I said, this is not true in the Old Testament. This is not true in the Old Testament. This is not true in the Old Testament.

Because they didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Because they didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. And that's why even with the preaching of Jesus for three and a half years, those disciples could not become one.

So, when I see that, that even Jesus could not make 11 people one with his fantastic preaching, with all his preaching, then I don't believe that my preaching is going to make even two people one. So we can understand all the principles by listening to God's word. But it's only when we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, really fill us, that we'll become one with others.

So on the day of Pentecost, we can think of these 120 people like 120 pieces of iron that were put into a fire. In the fire. And when they came out of the fire, it was one piece.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. So a lot of people who think they have the fire of the Holy Spirit, if it has not melted them, then they are not really the fire of the Holy Spirit. You see, two people can imagine they are filled with the Holy Spirit, but then they should melt into one.

When we don't love the truth about ourselves, God allows us to be deceived. See 2 Thessalonians 2, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, it speaks about certain people, verse 10, who did not receive the love of the

truth so as to be saved. To be saved.

2 Thessalonians chapter 2. So when they did not receive the love of the truth to be saved, it says in the next verse, therefore God sent a deluding influence on them so that they might believe what is false. 11, 10 and 11. See that's a terrifying verse that God himself will deceive us.

Satan, we know, tries to deceive us. And the Bible says our lusts in our flesh are also deceitful lusts. In Mark 4, we read about the deceitfulness of money.

So money can deceive us, making us think everything is okay because we've got plenty of money. And our lusts can deceive us, and the devil can deceive us. And all these things are around us all the time.

We're always dealing with money. We always have our lusts troubling us every day. And the devil is also around us every day.

And all three are trying to deceive us. Now deception is such, deception is, I mean, done so cleverly that you don't know that you're deceived. See if somebody gives you a 500 rupee note, and you know it's not a real note, then you're not deceived.

You're deceived only when you think it's a real note. So the man who is deceived does not know he is deceived. And that's important to remember.

That when we are deceived by the devil, we don't know we are deceived. And when your money deceives you, you don't know you're being deceived. And when your lusts deceive you, also you don't know you're being deceived.

Our only hope is if God gives us light and shows us that is deception. It took me quite a few years after I was born again to discover the deception there is in money. And the more I discovered it, I discovered that lots of believers haven't seen that deception.

And lots of people in our churches. And the result is that they don't grow spiritually. They are good people.

They are like children who get 100% in kindergarten. And 20 years later they still get 100%. But they are still in kindergarten.

They are still in the kindergarten class. So that's not great to get 100% for 20 years in the same class. If you got it in your first year, it's good.

So I've seen believers like that. They are good believers. 20 years later they are good believers, but they are not progressed.

They are not dropping out of school or getting zero or any such thing. But you don't see any spiritual growth in them into the likeness of Christ or the knowledge of God. But in their own mind, because their knowledge increases so much, they think they are becoming more spiritual.

Or because they attend so many meetings, they think they are spiritual. Or because they understand the doctrine correctly, they think they are spiritual. One of the greatest deceptions among Protestant and Pentecostal Christians is this.

They think their correct doctrine will save them. My doctrine is all correct. I have said the magic words, Lord Jesus, come into my heart.

Now I am safe for eternity. I would say that is one of the greatest deceptions of Satan. If you don't take heed to it, you've got to be careful where you're going to end up when you finish your life.

If correct doctrine could save people, the Pharisees would all have been saved. Jesus gave a certificate to the Pharisees' doctrine in Matthew 23, verse 2 and 3. That everything they say is correct. Everything they say is correct.

But in the same chapter later on he said, how will you escape hell? Because he said your life does not match up with your doctrine. You only clean the outside of the cup so that you have a good testimony before people. The condition of most born again people is exactly like that.

Their doctrine is absolutely correct. They don't have wrong doctrines like many other denominations in Christianity. And their outer life is very clean.

Exactly 100% like the Pharisees. Do you think the Pharisees thought they were going to hell? They thought how can we go to hell when our doctrine is all correct and our external life is so clean? Nobody dared to say that to them till Jesus got up and said, you will go to hell. Teaching us that correct doctrine will never take us to heaven.

And teaching us that a good external life will also not take us to heaven. Because even in the Old Testament it was written, Man looks on the outward appearance. But God looks at the heart.

He doesn't see my outward appearance. God doesn't see my outward appearance. He looks on the inside.

He looks at your inside. He looks at your attitude towards people. He looks at your attitude towards money.

He looks at your attitude towards sexual lust. Those are the things God looks at. Man only looks to see whether you come to the meetings regularly.

Whether you know the Bible. So many external things like that. If we want to please the Lord, the number one requirement is to finish with trying to please men.

You must end with that. You must cut it off and say, Lord, I never again want to please a human being. I want to live before your face.

You know, just like they have many practices for a drama. And the more rehearsals they do, the better the drama is. I many times have a rehearsal of standing at the judgment seat of Christ.

It's very helpful for me. I would recommend it to you also. I shut my eyes and I imagine that Christ has come.

And he calls people one by one. And then my turn comes. And I stand before him.

And I say, Lord, I want to please you. And he strips me of all my external testimony. And he throws away all the books and tapes and all of mine.

He says, no, I'm not going to look at all that. All the thing which the world calls ministry, he throws that all away. And he says, let me look at your inner life now.

What were the type of things you were thinking about most of the time? Were you thinking about me or were you thinking about money? Were you thinking about purity or something impure? Did you have a loving attitude to people or did you have jealousy and bitterness against people? Did you backbite, gossip, speak evil about people behind their back? That's going to be the assessment of my life. And those rehearsals really helped me. Because if I evaluate myself by what I think is success in my ministry, I'll just deceive myself thoroughly.

No, I've got to evaluate myself by my thought life, my attitudes. And the motives with which I say things or do things. The motive.

With which I speak something to somebody. You know, sometimes you can say something that sounds so loving and your motive is not loving at all. God is going to judge all that.

So, if I fear God, I will cleanse myself all the time. And so, one of the prayers I pray to God is, Lord, please show me my inner condition every day. You know, more important than you're taking a bath or shower every day is to cleanse your heart every day.

It's not such a serious thing if I don't take a shower one day. But it's a very serious thing if I don't cleanse my heart for one day. I'm just telling you the way I have tried to preserve my own life.

I can't say, oh, I accepted Jesus 50 years ago, I'm okay. If I don't love the truth about myself, to be saved from sin that God shows me, to be saved from wrong attitudes to other people, I'm not talking about offending people. If I offend people because of something that concerns me, that's sin.

You know, somebody hurts me and then I go and hurt him. That's evil. But when we follow Jesus, we will offend many people because we preach the truth.

We don't have to go and apologize to any of them. Jesus didn't go to the Pharisees. Oh, I'm sorry to call you a generation of vipers.

I'm so sorry that I said you'll all go to hell. I heard that some of you got offended because of that. The word of God will offend thousands of people who don't accept the Bible as the authority for their life.

Non-Christians will be offended when you say Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. Non-Christians will be offended when you say Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. You know, people ask me that sometimes.

Non-Christians. Why are you Christians so negative? Why are Christians so narrow-minded? There are so many ways to God. I say truth is narrow-minded.

Truth is always narrow-minded. I'll give you an example. 2 plus 2 is 4. Now somebody says, why are you so narrow-minded? Why don't you accept 3 also as an answer? Be broad-minded.

5 is also an answer. 200 is an answer. I say, I'm sorry.

2 plus 2 is 4. There is no other answer. Even a little bit, 3.9. Wrong. It's 4. That's the way.

Jesus said, I'm the truth. No one comes to the Father but by me. So, I tell them, are you asking me to call Jesus a liar? Oh, then they get disturbed and say, no, no, no.

We're not asking you to call Jesus a liar. Then I have to tell you what Jesus said. No one comes to the Father but by him.

And in the 2nd century, Christians were killed for saying that. Today, Christians are scared to say that because they'll get disturbed in some way, troubled in some way. But we must love the truth.

Especially the truth about ourselves. For example, if God shows me some pride in something I said or did. Not what people say.

People may think I'm proud. I think a lot of people thought Jesus was proud. That doesn't care one bit for me.

I don't bother one bit about that. But a lot of people thought Jesus was very hard. Calling people a generation of vipers.

You know, some people say to me sometimes, brother, why can't you be gentle like Jesus? I say, he called people a generation of vipers. I've never done that. He called his co-worker Peter Satan.

I've never called any of my co-workers Satan. He said, if you stumble a little child, you must get a millstone, a heavy one and go and jump in the sea. This is the gentle Jesus you're talking about? The trouble is you fellows haven't read the Bible.

You read selected portions. Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. You got a one-sided picture of Jesus.

That's the trouble with a lot of Christians. But Jesus is not only full of grace, he's also full of truth. Full of truth and grace.

And the glory of God is seen in truth and grace. And he said, if you don't love the truth to be saved, then, God says in verse 11, he himself will deceive you. Not only the devil will deceive you, he will deceive you.

Money will deceive you. Your lust will deceive you. And your only hope of salvation, God himself will also deceive you.

What a terrible situation that can be. What does it mean to love the truth? First of all, it means God's word is truth, Jesus said in John 17, 17. And when I see some truth in scripture, even if 1,000 million people say the other thing, I say you're wrong.

There's a very favorite verse of mine in Romans chapter 3 and verse 3. Romans 3 and verse 4. It says in the middle of that verse, let God be true and every man be found a liar. Middle of that verse, let God be true and every man be found a liar. Let God be true and every man be found a liar.

So that's the position I take. Supposing, you know, there are nearly 7,000 million or 700 crore people in the world today. Supposing they all say, you cannot overcome sin.

But God's word says, sin will not have dominion over you. You know, the Lord asked me that question once. Supposing nobody in the world believed in victory over sin.

And you are the only one who believed it from God's word. Would you still stand for it? I said, yes, Lord. Let God be true and every man a liar.

And the Lord said, will you accept Jesus Christ as your example, even if all other Christians don't follow that example? I said, yes, sure. I don't care if other Christians compromise and change things. See, the biggest area where Christian work today goes away from the principles of Jesus is in the area of money.

They don't follow the principles of Jesus in the matter of money. The early apostles did. And the early apostles used to teach that any preacher who asks you for money is a false prophet.

Whoever it is, whoever it is. One of the earliest books, Christian books, written after the Bible is a little booklet called The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. It was written in the 2nd century.

I read it once. And there it says, whichever preacher asks you for money, he's a false prophet. That is the teaching of the twelve apostles.

That is how the early apostles distinguished between the true servants of God and the false servants of God. And by that standard, you can say that 95% of today's preachers are all false prophets. And the proof of that is none of them tell you how to overcome sin.

They only tell you how to be healed and how to make money and things like that. And the blessing of God is supposed to live a comfortable life on this earth. But if that is a comfortable life, then none of the apostles pleased God, because they didn't have a comfortable life.

So, they didn't have a comfortable life. So, we need to come back to what is written in the scriptures. And say, if it is not in the word, I don't care who preaches it, it's wrong.

If Jesus didn't do it, I don't care which preacher or 10,000 preachers do it, it's wrong. If Jesus didn't do it, I don't care which preacher or 10,000 preachers do it, it's wrong. And success is not the test of God's approval.

Jesus said that many will come and say, Lord, we can't heal the sick in your name, did miracles in your name. That was success. But Jesus said, go to hell, all of you.

Because there was sin in your life. So, God allows people to be deceived. That means he can allow people to believe that they are born again when they are not born again.

God allows them to believe what is false. See, 2 Thessalonians 2:11. It says in the last part, God makes them believe a lie. He allows them to believe a lie.

He allows them to believe they are born again when they are not born again. He believes they are born again just because they said the magic words once, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. He allows them to believe that just because their doctrine is right, they are born again.

He allows them to believe that they are filled with the Holy Spirit just because they speak in tongues. No, they are not filled with the Spirit. They don't manifest the Spirit of Christ.

But they are absolutely convinced that they are filled with the Spirit. Why? Because God makes them believe a lie. You know, this is one of the reasons why I am not a Christian.

This is one of the most terrifying verses in the whole Bible. How can I be saved from that? I can be saved from that only if I love the truth. To be saved.

First of all, when I read something in scripture, I must say that is the truth. And everybody else's faults. I want to encourage you, brothers and sisters, you will never be deceived if you take that position.

You know, but if you respect some preacher so much, even me, you respect me so much that you don't go by scripture. You will be deceived. We must never respect a preacher so much that we respect him more than God's Word.

That's why I show you scripture for everything I say. Because I don't want your faith to depend on my cleverness. It must be on God's Word.

The Christian world is full of preachers who are preaching their own cleverness and their own testimonies. Many people's faith today comes by listening to testimonies. They hear testimonies on television and big public crusades.

They get faith there. That's a false faith. Romans 10, 17 says faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

If you got faith by listening to somebody's testimony, that is not the faith of the Bible. Romans 10 says so clearly, faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. So, that's the first area where we must love the truth.

The second area where we must love the truth. Is when the Holy Spirit shows us truth about ourselves. Where he shows us that thing you said was because you were jealous.

You got some jealousy against that person because he's better than you. You can be jealous of somebody's children. You can be jealous of somebody's house.

You can be jealous of somebody's job. You can be jealous that somebody is more spiritual than you are. You can be jealous that people in the church respect somebody else more than they respect you.

There are a thousand things you can be jealous of. And when you are jealous of somebody, you can never bear to hear anything good said about that person. And you delight in hearing some bad things about that person.

That's the way to test whether you are jealous. You ask yourself, Now, I want you to all, in your own interest, expose yourself to this scam. If you allow the scam to search your heart, you'll be saved today.

Otherwise, you'll continue to be deceived. Can you think of someone about whom, if you hear something bad, you're quite happy? Be honest about it. Can you think of someone about whom, if you hear something good, you don't feel very happy about that? Can you think of someone about whom, if you hear something good, you don't feel very happy about that? Can you think of someone about whom, if you hear something bad, you don't feel very happy about that? Dear brothers and sisters, You must face up to it.

You are jealous. You must admit it. Admit that you are jealous.

Love the truth. About yourself. Don't give excuses and say, no, no, no, no, it's not.

If you try to give excuses, you don't love the truth. But if you can honestly say today, If I hear bad about anybody in the world, I'm sad. Anybody in the world.

If I hear something good about anybody in the world, I'm happy. If you can honestly say that, brother, sister, you're really a godly person. A godly person.

You can reach that point, if you're honest about yourself and cleanse yourself. I found in myself that I was a bit unhappy when I heard good news about somebody. And I went before God and I said, Lord, there's something evil in my heart.

Nobody can see it. But I saw something there when I heard that news. And I never knew there was such evil in my heart.

I want to love the truth about myself. I want to be saved from this. God saved me.

And then another time, God may show me in some other situation, something else. And I can keep on cleansing myself. Till Jesus comes.

Do you know that's what we are supposed to do? That is what we are supposed to do. That doesn't mean we don't serve or witness for Christ. I'm seeking to serve the Lord 365 days of the year.

And I believe you should also serve the Lord every single day, witness and share God's word with other people. So, we don't wait till we are perfect before we start serving the Lord. I mean, Peter started serving the Lord the very first day he was filled with the spirit.

He was not perfect. But as we keep serving the Lord, we must become more and more perfect. You know, some people say, accuse us like this.

What are you people just sitting and purifying yourself the whole time? You are just purifying yourselves the whole time? Yeah, but we are also serving others the whole time. We are not sitting inside some building locked up just purifying ourselves. But we do that, so that the pipe inside is clean, so that when we serve others, they get some clean water instead of dirty water.

I mean, when you open the tap, you are getting dirty water out of it all the time. It probably means even though the tank is full of clean water, your pipes are all dirty. So, you got to clean the pipe.

That's the problem with God's people. The pure water comes from heaven, but by the time it goes through me, it becomes dirty and giving it to other people. And people say, no brother, we must serve, we must serve, we must serve, we must serve.

Serve people with what? Give them all dirty glasses of water? No, I need to purify myself, so that tomorrow I can give a little cleaner water to that brother. And next year, the glass of water that comes through me will be much cleaner than this year. Because I spend my time purifying myself every day.

I love the truth. When God shows me something about myself, then I'll never be deceived. I will never imagine that I'm born again when I'm not born again.

I will not imagine that I'm filled with the spirit just because I speak in tongues. See, 1 John 3, here it speaks about the hope that every believer has. We say the hope is the second coming of Christ.

That's only half the hope. You know, it's like a coin. You turn the other side, something is printed on the other side also.

No, something is printed on the other side of the coin also. What is written on the other side? 1 John 3, He will come, verse 2, and we shall see him as he is. There are two things.

One, he will come back. Second, we shall be like him. He will come and we shall see him and we shall be like him.

These are the two sides of the blessed hope. Most Christians think of only one side of it. He will come and we shall see him.

I say, brother, sister, that's only one side of the hope. What is the full hope? The full hope is we shall be like him. So, when you have both sides of the hope, what will you do? How do you know whether you got both sides of the hope? You can say, yeah, I've got both sides of the hope.

No, don't be so sure. Here is the test. Verse 3, Everyone who has this hope will spend his time purifying himself until he becomes as pure as Jesus Christ.

You want to find out whether you got this hope or not? Both sides of the hope? Do you want to find out whether you have this? Ask yourself this question. Do you cleanse yourself every day from sin, from new sins that you are discovering in your life? Have you discovered some new sins in your life in the last one year? You say no. Then you are deceiving yourself.

Everyone who has this hope purifies himself. Now, the only person who can say, I don't need to purify myself is the one who can say, I've already become like Jesus Christ. I don't need to purify myself.

I've already become like Christ. Nobody will dare to say that. I'll tell you my own experience.

The closer I get to the Lord, the more I discover something. That I'm more unlike Christ than I thought I was. I think I'm becoming like Christ and I say, oh boy, what a distance to become like Christ.

Because when we are far away from the Lord, we don't see those little, little, little acts of selfishness as unchrist-like. Most Christians don't see the selfishness in their own lives. Most Christians don't see the lack of compassion for other people in their own lives.

Most Christians don't see the hardness in their own hearts. Most Christians don't see the pride in their own life. Most Christians are just patting themselves on the back all the time saying, I'm okay.

But they find plenty of fault with other people. I'm not talking about doctrine. Doctrine is very clear to see where's light and darkness.

Because they say, everything that's here is light, everything that's not here is darkness. It's very easy. So I compare everybody with scripture, not with myself.

But that is doctrine. But when it comes to sin in our lives, that's not so easy to see. We must be honest, and then God will show us more.

I thank God that I get continuous light on myself, almost every day. That makes me a very happy man. It's like having a bath every day, having a bath or a shower every day.

You feel fresh. Are you getting light on yourself? On the selfishness and the pride there is in you? Those are the two main things. And love of money is the third one.

These are two or three things found in every believer. If you don't ask God to cleanse you from it, you will die with these things still in you. You have to ask God to show you, otherwise he won't show you.

You say, Lord, I want to really be free from these things. I want to be free from these things. I want to be free.

And if you don't ask God to give you freedom, you can't free yourself. But if you love the truth, and you keep cleansing yourself, you know what is the result? We come into fellowship with other people who are cleansing themselves. Now you will understand this verse, 1 John 1.7 If we walk in the light, we can have fellowship with one another.

With God and with one another. If you and your wife don't have glorious fellowship, then one of you or one of us or both of you are not walking in the light. If you don't have glorious fellowship with your brothers and sisters, then either you or the others are not walking in the light.

To walk in the light means that I am getting more and more light on myself. To stand still in the light means that I am getting no more light. Then I am not progressing.

Walking means I am getting closer and closer to the light of God. That means I am getting more and more light on myself. To me that is the mark of God's blessing.

So when people ask me, how do you know whether God is blessing you? I say it's got nothing to do with money. It's got nothing to do with health. It's got to do with God showing me sin in my life which I can put away.

That's how I know God is blessing me. That I get light on myself. I become more and more free from sin.

That is how we can become one body. It's because people don't do that in their life, they never become one body. Because they don't do it, they don't become one body.

So let's pray. Heavenly Father, it's so easy to understand these things in our mind. Help us to practice them.

Pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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