

A Firm Grip on the Christian Life ■ The Blood of Christ

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus seeking eternal life but was hindered by his attachment to wealth. It challenges young people to prioritize following Christ wholeheartedly, to let go of hindrances like traditions or worldly affections, and to take sin seriously by understanding the value of the blood of Christ in cleansing from all sin. The speaker encourages radical commitment to Christ, a revulsion towards sin, and a willingness to be used by God despite feelings of inadequacy.

Scripture: Mark 10:17, Matthew 19:21, Hebrews 9:14, 1 John 1:7, Hebrews 1:9, Luke 24:39, Leviticus 17:11, Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 21:3

Topics: "Radical Commitment to Christ", "Letting Go of Worldly Attachments"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus seeking eternal life but was hindered by his attachment to wealth. It challenges young people to prioritize following Christ wholeheartedly, to let go of hindrances like traditions or worldly affections, and to take sin seriously by understanding the value of the blood of Christ in cleansing from all sin. The speaker encourages radical commitment to Christ, a revulsion towards sin, and a willingness to be used by God despite feelings of inadequacy.

Transcript

About the young man who came to Jesus. He was one of the most remarkable young men in Israel who came to the Lord because, you know, he was a, we know him as the rich young ruler. I want you to turn to Mark chapter 10 and verse 17.

Mark chapter 10 verse 17. Here was a person who was young, rich, ruler, and on top of all that he was seeking for eternal life. And not only that, when Jesus mentioned the commandments in verse 19, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't marry a false witness, don't cheat, honor your father and mother.

He said, I've kept all these things from my youth up. That's why I said he was a remarkable person. And yet Jesus looked at him and it says here, Jesus felt a love for him.

Those are the words I want you to think of. Jesus looked at this young man and he saw in him something that was lacking, something that he was not willing to give up. And Jesus had a tremendous love for him.

I believe that as the Lord looks at you young people, he's the same yesterday, today and forever. And he looks at you with that same love and he'll point out to you what is lacking. And when he pointed out what was lacking, in his case it was his tremendous wealth.

It's not necessarily money that makes us wealthy. We could have interests in life or abilities or something that makes us wealthy. Now, a true Christian is one who has found his wealth in God and he's satisfied with God.

Anything other than that is sort of extra, but he's already found his wealth in God. Jesus is his wealth. But we don't start like that.

When we are young, we have other interests and other affections and other things that make us wealthy in some way. It could be intelligence, it could be friends, it could be some interest in the world, it could be sport, it could be music, it could be anything. Something that means a lot to us.

And that's the thing that's going to hinder you finally from following the Lord. In his case, it was his money. It's not the same in everybody's case.

And the Lord told him, if you want to follow me, you've got to first give up that. And it says at these words, his face fell. Verse 22, he was bright and suddenly his face fell.

You mean I've got to give up that in order to follow you? And he just went away. And the interesting thing there is that Jesus never went after him, saying, okay, let's do this in stages. No.

The human way is to say, okay, if you don't want to give up everything right now, let's go 10%, 20% next year, 30% and work your way up. Jesus said, no, it's got to be radical. Cut it off straight away if you want to be my disciple.

And if you're not willing to cut it off, well, forget it. I see that the Lord was not afraid of losing people because he didn't want those who were not radical and wholehearted to be his disciples. Unfortunately, the church around the world has welcomed those who are not wholehearted and say, come along, you'll increase our numbers.

And in many churches, you'll increase the offering and all this rubbish. That's what's destroyed Christianity. But I see in the case of Jesus, I mean, he only called those who were willing to come and die and follow him.

Young people for whom he, by the way, Jesus called mostly young people, all his disciples who are younger than him, less than 30. And in three years, they were ready to be apostles, to turn the world upside down. Imagine 33-year-old young people ready to turn the world upside down because they were radical.

When the Lord told them to give up something, they obeyed immediately. Whenever the Lord tells you something and you're a little slow to obey it, you say, well, let me think about it. That's usually an indication of the way you're going to be all through your life concerning every decision.

And you see these examples of somebody like James or Peter and Andrew were fishing. Jesus said, chuck it. They chucked it and followed it.

Or James and John were mending their nets. He said, drop it. His father and mother, his father and brothers or anybody who else was there, just left them and walked.

Or think of Matthew. It's even more surprising. He was totaling up his accounts and he hadn't even finished.

And the Lord said, drop it. And he just dropped his pen and left. These were the people whom the Lord used to turn the world upside down.

There was something about them. When they heard the Lord call, they didn't have to think twice about it. They're willing to drop everything.

And you see, that's a tremendous privilege we have as you have as young people. I remember when the Lord brought me to salvation, I was 19 and I had all my ambitions in life. As young, we have ambitions.

And it became clear to me pretty quickly that I would drop everything if I wanted to follow Him. Looking back now, 50 years since I was converted, no regrets. I'll tell you something.

If you are like these scholars, like Matthew and James and John, looking back 50 years from now, you won't have any regrets. But if you are this dilly-dally type and maybe after a year, you finally do what the Lord tells you, you'll be like that all your life. Something else the Lord tells you, you'll take another year to do that.

And something else the Lord tells you, you'll take another year to do that. And you'll just drift along. So, I want to encourage you to learn from the examples of these people.

Jesus looked at him and loved him. You know, when I see you young people, I see the tremendous potential there is here. If 11 people below the age of 33 could turn the world upside down, why is it we don't see more people like that today who are influencing hundreds and thousands for Christ? The fault can't be with God.

It's not, it's got nothing to do with education or knowledge. I believe those apostles knew less of the Bible than we know. Because, you know, they never had a Bible like this.

It's only in the synagogues they could afford to have these handwritten Old Testaments. We know more of the Bible than they do. We've got concordances and we can take word studies and words like faith and grace and love and impress people with so many things.

And we can present truth in such attractive ways. Well, that's it. It doesn't seem to, our life, rivers of living water don't seem to flow from our life.

And I'll tell you this, the reason is there's something God sees we're holding on to. Something, sometimes it's a tradition. Many of you, all of us actually, who've grown up in Christian homes have traditions.

Not only Christian homes, non-Christian homes in India, they have their traditions. And it's very difficult to give up those traditions. Those traditions are precious to us, just like this man's money.

And I'll tell you that. Your face will fall and you'll go away, hanging on to your traditions, and the Lord will let you go. And you'll live with your traditions and waste your life.

We have doctrines that we have learned from childhood in our church. All of us have come from some church. And those doctrines can be very precious to us, like this man's money.

And as we read the Scriptures, we find some of those doctrines are not in line with Scripture. It's just something we inherited. And the Lord tells us to drop that, accept what I've said in my word.

And it's so difficult for us to give it up, because we wonder what will other people think, etc., etc. And the Lord just lets you go. Yeah, you'll go to heaven.

You'll drift along, wasting your life on earth, and maybe finally end up in heaven. I don't want to waste my life like that and get to heaven. I hope your goal in life, if you're serious about being a Christian, I hope your goal in life is not just to get to heaven.

Peter says in the second Peter of having an abundant entrance. You can have an entrance into heaven or an abundant entrance. You can either have the Lord say to you, well done, good and faithful servant.

Or he can say to you, well, you've made it. Did you? Okay. What do you want the Lord to say to you? I never thought you'd make it, but you did.

I don't want the Lord to say that to me. I want him to say, well done, good and faithful servant. Whatever the Lord told you, you did it immediately.

You didn't dilly-dally and think about it. I mean, you need to think about it if you're not sure of what the Lord has said. But once you're clear, for example, you read something in scripture, there's no need to think about it anymore.

It doesn't matter if the whole world believes something else. I remember many years ago, the Lord said to me, if no Christian on earth believed Romans 6 14, that sin shall not have dominion over you. And every Christian on earth believed that you have to fall into sin.

Would you stand up and say, I believe God's word, that sin will not have dominion over me? I said, yes, Lord. Let God be true and every man a liar. I want to tell you young people, take that attitude.

Your life will be different. Break away from traditions and the fear of men and so many things. You see an older generation around you who wasted their life because they're hanging on to traditions.

You got to break free from them. You got to break free from the traditions of your parents. In fact, through many years of building the church in India and many churches, I've discovered one thing, that the Lord was absolutely right when he said in Luke 14 26, that the first condition of discipleship was to hate father, mother, brother, sister, wife and children.

I've no doubt about it at all. I know the cults use it to detach people from their parents and have nothing more to do with them. That's not the meaning of that.

We've taught people in our church to honor their parents and to love their parents and to care for them and provide for them, but to never let them influence the way you are to live your Christian life. That's the thing. You don't ask them to break away from their parents.

They live with their parents, but they don't let their parents influence their life. That's the thing. That's what it means to be a radical Christian.

And the easiest time to be that is when you're young. It's not knowledge that will make you spiritual. Think of this young man.

He had such a lot of knowledge, such an upright life, but there was something that was precious to him that he couldn't give up, even when the Lord told him, that's the thing that you're lacking. Very often it's, I found it's, for many Christians, it's tradition. Our traditions, inherited traditions that are very precious to us.

More precious than Jesus himself, that we are willing to break fellowship with people because our traditions are so precious. What can the Lord do with such people? Just like this rich young ruler, he just let him go. And we'll drift along and hang around with other people who hold those same traditions, whom also the Lord has let go like that, and we'll waste our life.

Well, I decided long ago, I grew up, you know, I was born into a family which had traditions, Christian traditions. They prayed to Mary, prayed for the dead, the Orthodox Syrian Church in India. And it took me a long time to break free from any of those things because I didn't know the scriptures.

But when I saw something in the scriptures, one of the things I decided very early in life, after I was born again, was that if I saw something in scripture, I would study carefully. Once I was convinced it's in scripture, I would throw away whatever else I believe and said, I'll accept scripture. Now I want to encourage you young people to take that position.

Let me turn you to a verse now in Romans chapter 6. Romans chapter 6. Now here are two expressions. Verse 17, it speaks of being slaves of sin. And verse 18, it speaks of being slaves of righteousness.

Here's a country, think of it, this is, let's say, two islands or two countries. Here's a country where everybody's a slave of sin. You know what being a slave of sin is? Sin says do this and you do it.

Sin says lust and you lust. Sin says get angry and you get angry. Sin says tell a lie, you tell a lie.

Sin says love money, you love money. Sin says whatever sin says you do, that's a slave. A slave is one who obeys his master 100%.

Whatever sin says you do. And here's another country called righteousness. Everybody's a slave of righteousness.

Righteousness says be good, they're good. Don't love money, you don't love money. Love your enemies, they love their enemies.

Whatever righteousness says, they do it. They're slaves. Not just do righteousness, but slaves of righteousness.

Slaves of righteousness. They're just righteous all the time. And between this country and this country, there's a bridge to cross over from here to there.

How do you cross over? Let's see. Romans 6, the bridge is there between verse 17 and 18. But thanks be to God that though you were...has to wake you up, pay attention now.

That though you were slaves of sin. Now listen, there are two things here. You became obedient from the heart.

That's the thing you need to hear. You became obedient. Now in the Christian world today, there's a lot of emphasis on faith.

But we know it's the wrong type of faith because it doesn't produce results. It doesn't produce godliness. The righteous shall live by faith it says.

Well it's obviously not real faith with most people. It doesn't make them righteous and it doesn't bring them to spiritual life. So it's the obedience of faith that Romans emphasizes.

They became...so we are thinking of this bridge that crosses from slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness. You became obedient from the heart. Not that they understood it in the mind.

The tragedy of a lot of Christianity today is understanding in the mind. We're oozing with knowledge. And particularly since the advent of the internet and so many Christian programs and messages on the internet, there's such an abundance of knowledge.

People are hearing endless sermons. By the time they're 30 years old, they've heard more sermons than Christians heard in a lifetime in the first century. It's knowledge, knowledge, knowledge.

And their heads are becoming bigger. I don't know whether you've seen little babies, it's very rare, but I've seen one or two in my life who got a problem called hydrocephalus, which is the water fills up the head. And I've seen a baby like that.

The head is about the same size as the body. You look at it and there's no hope of it living. And I think of a lot of Christians like that today.

Their heads are so big with knowledge. They know everything because they've heard so much. They've understood so much.

It's not obedience from the heart. It's knowledge. The thing that Adam reached for.

The knowledge of good and evil. The knowledge of biblical truths. Correct, accurate understanding.

You know the devil's got an accurate understanding of all biblical truth and he's still going to be in hell. So accurate understanding with good teachers of the word does not make anybody spiritual. If it could, the devil would have been spiritual long ago.

It's obedience from the heart. The devil's got zero of that. So we think of this bridge from slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness.

Remember, it's not knowledge. Knowledge is necessary. I'll come to that in a moment.

But it's an obedience from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were committed. There's a particular doctrine. Doctrine is important.

For example, if you did not know the doctrine that Christ died for our sins on the cross, you'd live in perpetual uncertainty about whether your sins are forgiven. Doctrine is important, but you're committed to it. It doesn't say this doctrine was committed to you.

It says you were committed to the doctrine. That means these Romans were committed to a certain doctrine. And the result of that was they became free from sin, free from that country, and became slaves of righteousness.

It was like getting the citizenship of a country which people wanted to get that citizenship. I want to be a citizen of the country where everybody's a slave of righteousness. I want to build a church where everybody's a slave of righteousness.

People who were once slaves of sin. That's the only type of church that the Lord's happy with. We may not be able to find such a form of righteousness, but at least the form of doctrine should be that which leads people who want to become slaves of righteousness to become.

It's not certain that everybody will cross the bridge because there are too many people who hang on to their wealth or their traditions or their affection for somebody or something or the other which will keep them on the other side forever. But there will be some, and I found that in many many places, there will be some who the Lord delivers from that country and brings them to a slave of righteousness. So there's a form of teaching mentioned here, a form of teaching, a particular teaching, a doctrine to which if we are committed, if we give ourselves to that and we are obedient from the heart to that, it'll free us from the slavery.

You know Jesus said in John 8 32, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. So it's very important to know the truth. When I was a young man and I heard all these different doctrines that different churches were preaching, and many churches are pretty exclusive, they feel that we alone are right and everybody else is wrong, but they all hold the same Bible.

Holding the same Bible, this group says we've got the right doctrine, everybody else is wrong. Another group says we've got the right doctrine, everybody else is wrong. And I was confused like probably some of you are confused.

And this is the verse that helped me. If what you have heard is the truth, it should set you free from sin. If it doesn't set you free from sin in your life, then you haven't got the truth.

Or you haven't understood it properly. Because John 8 32 is very clear. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

And they, you know, if you're not familiar with that passage, let's just turn to it for a moment in John chapter 8 verse 32, because the people said to Jesus, we're not slaves, what do you mean we'll be free? John 8 32, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. And they said, hey, we're not enslaved to anybody. They didn't know that they were slaves.

We are not enslaved because we are Abraham's offspring. Today people say we are Christians. We accepted the Lord on such and such a date.

We got baptized on such and such a date. It's the same type of boasting. They said we are Abraham's offspring.

Today people say, I go to such and such a church. It's not one of those worldly churches. We're a good church.

We've got certain standards. I belong to this church. That's the equivalent of saying we're Abraham's offspring.

We believe the Bible. We use the King James Version. We were baptized the proper way.

All this type of stuff. What's the use of all that if you're a slave of sin? What's the use of whatever version of the Bible you read if you lust with your eyes and you love money and you can't love your enemies and you can't always speak the truth and rivers of living water not flowing from you? I don't care which version you use or which church you belong to. We are Abraham's offspring.

We belong to this church. We use this version of the Bible and everything else is wrong. We've got this.

Our sisters all veil their heads. Great. But they gossip.

What's the use of veiling their heads if you gossip? See, it's a question of sin. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. And they said we're not enslaved and Jesus said you are.

Everyone, verse 34, who commits sin is the slave of sin. Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. You know, that's what we saw in Romans.

Slaves of sin. And Jesus said you shall know the truth. The truth is what we read in Romans 6. That form of doctrine which takes us across from this side to that side.

As I said, when I see young people like you in different places, I see the tremendous potential there is. Young people with their whole life ahead of them I'll tell you honestly, I'm so glad that I gave my life totally to Christ when I was 19 and not when I was 49 or something like that. No, because I had my whole life ahead of me.

I know you can be saved as a dying thief in your last moments, but I don't want to be saved like that. I don't want to go to heaven and say, Lord, I didn't get a chance to do anything for you to show my gratitude for what you did for me on the cross. I want to be able to enter heaven with an abundant entrance, not for any reward.

I have no interest in reward. If the Lord gives it, that's another thing. But that's not what I live for.

But I want to go to heaven and to the presence of Jesus, having lived a life where I have been able to express my gratitude to Jesus with all my heart for many, many years for his having died for me on the cross. I mean, if you understand the tremendous price that Jesus had to pay to forgive our sins, you'll know that just saying thank you or just going to church once a week or paying your tithe, that's no way to express our gratitude. The only way we can express our gratitude to Christ for dying on the cross is by giving our life totally to him.

And that privilege you have when you're young, that privilege that guy who came to Jesus had when he was young, and he turned away from it because he went after money. I don't know what happened to him finally. If he went like that and didn't turn at all, he's in hell today.

Even though he went to the synagogue, and even though he honored his parents, and even though he never committed adultery, even though he never murdered, even though he kept all those commandments, he went to hell. And you can live your upright life, just don't go to hell. And if you were to go and ask him today, well, what do you think of that decision you took when you were a young man? You

know what the answer would be.

Oh, let's assume that towards the end of his life he came to his senses, and finally he did become a Christian. Okay, he went to heaven. You go and ask him in heaven today.

Do you wish that you had decided for Christ when you were 20, rather than when you were 70, six months before you died? Aren't you happy that you're in heaven? You say, I'm happy in heaven, but boy, what a lot of regret I have that I could have lived 50 years for God and expressed my gratitude to him, and I wasted it all for something so stupid and foolish as money, and I thought it would make me make me happy. That's how the devil fools us. That's how he fooled Eve, by telling her that you'll be better off if you take this.

I know God's told you this is not good, but I tell you it'll be good for you, and that's how the devil's fooled so many young people. So as I said, I see the potential here. Jesus saw the potential in this young man.

He gave him the same offer that he gave to Peter and James and John. Come, follow me. Those are the exact words he spoke to Peter.

I mean, this guy could have been an apostle. Instead of being an apostle, he wasted his life just being a rich man on earth or a businessman or whatever he was, and the danger here is that the Lord won't keep pestering you to follow after him. He just left him.

He said, if you don't want to follow me, forget it. So don't think that the Lord's going to keep on calling you endlessly, and the potential there is in your life for God, and which the devil also sees, that you, young man, young woman, there's a tremendous potential in your life to advance the kingdom of God, to further God's purposes, and to accomplish some wonderful things on this earth for God's kingdom, and the devil sees what a threat you can be for his kingdom, and so he's going to try and neutralize you in some way or the other. If you were to ask me what is one of the greatest griefs that I've had in watching Christianity, mostly in my own country, in the last 50 years, it's the sorrow of seeing number of young people exactly like you, who when they were 18, 20, 25, really zealous before they were married.

I see them years later, useless for God. Somewhere along the way, the devil fooled them, and when I saw them as young men, I thought, boy, this is tremendous, but then they get married to the wrong person, who's half-hearted, and they get dragged down, or they go after money, or something of earth, or hang on to some wretched tradition that they value more than Jesus Christ and his word, and then their whole life is neutralized, and they sit with their five or ten people forever. It's not God's will.

What does it mean to, when Jesus said, he who believes in me, out of his innermost being will rivers of living water. What did it mean when God said to Abraham, I will bless you, and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you. That's the promise in Genesis chapter 12, and we read in Galatians 3, 13 and 14, that because Christ became a curse for us on the cross, and took away everything connected with the curse, there's no more curse on my life, the blessing of Abraham can come upon me, can come upon you.

It's a fantastic word, through the Holy Spirit, that the whole purpose of God giving us the power of his Holy Spirit is so that that blessing he gave Abraham could be fulfilled in me, in you, which means, I will bless you, and every family on earth that you meet will be blessed through you. I want it. I claim it.

I say, Lord, every single family that ever comes in touch with me has got to be blessed in some way. Whether they accept the blessing or not is another thing. I mean, even Jesus couldn't help this rich young

ruler, and I don't think we'll be able to help many people on earth who don't accept what we have to offer, but something flows out of us.

Now, I want to say to every one of you sitting here, young people, that something can flow out from you in the years ahead of you, if you decide to be, and consistently say, Lord, I'm not gonna let anybody stand in the way. Not my father, not my mother, not my church tradition, nothing. I'm gonna be wholehearted, radical for you, and I'm only going to, I'm gonna fellowship with people who will keep challenging me and stirring me up.

I'm gonna read literature and listen to tapes and things like that that are going to challenge me to be radical, and I don't want any more of this half-hearted stuff. I don't want people coddling me with their traditions. I want to be wholehearted.

I want a spirit-filled life. I want rivers of living water flowing out from me. I don't want to be a blessing just to four or five people in my lifetime.

I want to be a blessing to thousands. That's the meaning of rivers. A river doesn't feed four or five people or quench the thirst of four or five people.

It's thousands. I believe that that's God's will for every single believer. So, the greatest grief in my life has been to see so many young people who wasted their life in something they're definitely going to regret, either when they come to the end of their life or when they left this earth, wherever they go.

Don't be like that. Don't be like that. If you allow your friends, even your Christian friends, to neutralize you and to neutralize your zeal and your fire, that means you love those friends more than you love Jesus.

Well, then there's not much hope for you. But if you decide right now that you're not going to let anyone come between you and the Lord, that's the meaning of when Jesus said, if you want to possess the kingdom, you've got to be a person of violence. You've got to fight against everything that's going to hinder you from going on with the Lord.

Externally, we are men and women of peace. Physically, we don't fight with anybody. But inwardly, we're going to have a radical, violent attitude to anything that hinders us from following after the Lord.

So it's very important to take that attitude in relation to every single thing that comes in the way of our following after Christ. And as young people, I want to share with you some of these fundamental things, fundamental parts of this doctrine to which you're committed that can transport us from being a slave of sin to a slave of righteousness. First of all, let me turn you to Hebrews in chapter 9. How shall we serve the living God? To serve the living God.

That's a great, the greatest thing you can do on earth, to serve the living God. Hebrews 9 verse 14. How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered Himself without any blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? I find that many Christians, when they have given up what they know to be sin, which very often is even the worldly person knows is sin, even the worldly person has a conscience.

A lot of non-Christians and even atheists who have a conscience that tells them murder is a sin, adultery is a sin. There are atheists I've known who were so upright and honest that they wouldn't even tell lies. They would not be partial.

There's a conscience that tells them that certain things are sin. So, if you have a conscience that tells you certain things are sin, it's not a very much better conscience than the conscience of many atheists and many non-Christians in the world. I know many non-Christians in India who do not commit adultery, who do not murder, who do not even tell lies.

So, if we pride ourselves that we keep the Ten Commandments, that's not something great. The Jewish people kept it and they were not saved by that. But here it speaks about our conscience being cleansed from dead works, not from sin, something beyond sin, from dead works.

And in my mingling with Christians around the world, I found 90 or 95 percent of them will not be able to tell you what dead works are. They read about it, but they don't know anything about it. It's just like people in the Old Testament.

The phrase dead works is not found in the Old Testament. There was no such thing as dead works in the Old Testament. Dead works is a New Testament phrase.

It's found in the book of Hebrews particularly. It speaks in Hebrews 6 about repentance from dead works. Repentance from sin we can understand.

Repentance from dead works. Here it speaks about our conscience being cleansed from dead works to serve the living God. And it says here the blood of Christ will cleanse your conscience from dead works.

Now, all Christians know that the blood of Christ can cleanse us from sin. Have you ever heard the blood of Christ can cleanse you from dead works? What are dead works? Dead works are good works, which are done with a wrong motive, done to impress people. For example, my preaching here could be a dead work right now, even though you're blessed by it, because my motive may be to get your honor.

Somebody's motive may be to make money through his preaching. Anybody who preaches to make money, all his preaching is dead works. Anybody who preaches to get honor from people, all his preaching is dead works.

But you say people are blessed by it. Yes. You remember Jesus said how there'll be people in the final day who come before him and say, Lord, we did miracles in your name.

And Jesus didn't say you're liars. You never did any miracles. They did miracles.

But what do you think those people who got the miracles, do you think they got blessed? Of course. We cast out demons. Here's a demon possessed person who's freed from demons because somebody cast out the demon.

And that guy probably gets saved finally, but the man who cast out the demon goes to hell. It's an amazing thing that Jesus said that, that people will come to him and say not one or two, but many will say this in Matthew 7, 22, 23, Lord, we did many miracles in your name. And Jesus says, get away from me.

I don't know you. Why was that? They were dead works. You know, miracles can be dead works.

You know, casting out demons can be dead works. Even though the person gets blessed, the fellow who does it is doing a dead work because he did it for honor. He did it for money.

He did it for himself. Whereas the law in the kingdom of God is whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do for the glory of God. That's not a dead work.

And do you know what it was that kept the Jewish people away from Christ when Jesus walked on this earth? It was not that they were all living in murder and adultery and theft and all that. And they didn't want Jesus because they wanted, wanted to continue. Do you think those Pharisees refused to accept Jesus because they wanted to live in adultery and sin and theft and all that? No, no, no, no.

They wanted to hold on to their traditions. That's what kept them from Christ. Never forget that.

It really opened my eyes when I studied the Gospels and saw that the thing that kept the Pharisees from coming to Christ was their love for their traditions. And I saw Christendom full of people who loved their traditions, their inherited traditions from their church, from their fathers. It prevents people from a godly life.

It prevents people from growth into Christ-likeness. They're good people. Twenty years later, they're good people, but they haven't progressed.

It's like a child is healthy when he's two years old. You see him twenty years later and he's the same height, same weight, and he's healthy. We are not happy because twenty years later, when he's twenty-two years old, he shouldn't be just the same height and size as he's two years old.

But that's how many Christians are. We're healthy. But there's no growth.

I've seen so many people like that. It's like getting all your grades A, top grades in your class, but you're still sitting in the kindergarten after twenty years. Of course, you're getting A grades continuously and you're still sitting in the kindergarten.

That's how many Christians are. I've seen them. I saw them twenty years ago.

They were good people then. They're good people today, but there's no growth. You can't say this person's grown in humility.

He's grown in zeal. He's grown in purity. He's grown in an understanding of God that he never had twenty years ago.

So it's because of dead works. It's not because the guy is living in sin. I believe this is the thing that hinders a lot of Christians today.

That's why I say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, break free from the traditions of your fathers and your churches and say, Lord, I want to follow your word. And never mind what people say. Be a radical Christian.

Dead works. The blood of Christ is to cleanse us from dead works, things that we do as a matter of routine. You can pray in a meeting and it could be a dead work.

We have to come to a life where you say, Lord, I want to live totally for your glory. And it's possible. The Bible never gives a command that is impossible to keep.

When it says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. It must be possible that God be true and every man a liar. You say, well, I haven't found many Christians like that.

Neither have I. But there are a few here and there. Jesus said there are very few who will find the way to life. I don't expect to find great crowds rushing along the narrow way.

No. It's very few find the way to life. And so I'm not surprised if they're very few.

But be one of those. And so we need to understand here, why does the New Testament speak so much about the blood of Christ, the blood of Christ? See, in Leviticus, there's a verse, if you go back to the Old Testament, this is why the Old Testament is important, to understand certain things in the New Testament. And I don't believe you'll ever understand the purpose of the blood of Christ unless you know something about what the Old Testament spoke about the blood.

See, Leviticus in chapter 17, Leviticus chapter 17 and verse 11, the life of the flesh is in the blood. Now read slowly. Let's learn to read the Bible slowly to understand it.

The life of the flesh is in the blood. And I've given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls because it is the blood by the reason of the life in it that makes atonement. And that is why I told the sons of Israel that when they should never eat blood when they kill an animal, they must drain out the blood.

The life of the flesh is in the blood. It's life. When a man's blood is drained out completely, that's the end of his life.

His heart may be perfectly okay, his kidneys, liver, every part in his body may be perfectly okay, but you drain out the blood from him and he's dead. The life of the flesh is in the blood. And so when Jesus died on the cross with all the blood that dripped out from him, dripped out from him, and finally when they pierced his heart, I believe that all the blood drained out from his body.

There wasn't a drop of blood left in his body. It was his life that was poured out. The life of Christ was in his blood, his earthly and his physical body was in his blood.

And it was all poured out. And that's why you know when we are as human beings we have flesh and bones and blood. But Jesus, after his resurrection, he pointed, he said to his disciples in Luke 24, he said these words in verse 39, see I'm not a spirit, I've got flesh and bones, Luke 24 39, but there was no blood.

In the resurrection body we'll have no blood. In Jesus' resurrection body there was no blood. It was only flesh and bones, because all the blood was drained out on the cross.

It was his life that was poured out. That physical life was poured out. It speaks about the value of that death of Christ on the cross.

And there we see the seriousness of sin. Turn to 1 John chapter 1. If we walk in the light, verse 7, as God himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. Jesus' life had to be poured out on the cross to cleanse us from all sin.

So how do I know whether I've really understood and appreciated the value of the blood of Christ? That's very easy to find out. You know a lot of people sing about the blood. Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? They talk about the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood.

But the only person who's really understood the value of the blood is the one who has learned to take every single sin seriously. If you don't take sin seriously, I say you haven't understood anything about the

blood of Christ. It's just a mantra, a sort of a magic word, blood of Jesus, blood of Jesus.

It's a very popular phrase among Christians, the blood of Jesus, the blood of Jesus. It means nothing to 99% of them because 99% live in sin. The blood of Jesus, his life was poured out to get rid of my sin like we sang in that song.

It was my sin that held him there. There's a poem which says, Lord ever when tempted let me see. Beneath the olive's moon pierced shade my God, my God alone outstretched and bruised and bleeding on the earth he made.

And make me feel it was my sin as though no other sins were there. That was to him who bears the world a load that he could scarcely bear. When you understand that, that was to him who bear, my sin, that was to him who bears the world a load that he could scarcely bear.

What? What is the load he could scarcely bear? My lustful thought, the punishment for that, my anger, my jealousy, my pride, my selfishness, my unwillingness to apologize to somebody whom I wronged. He had to die for that. He had to shed his blood.

His blood had to be poured out. I was a Christian for, born again Christian, for more than 16 years before I began to take sin seriously. And I know from my own experience that most Christians do not take sin seriously.

They keep talking about the blood of Jesus, blood of Jesus, blood of the lamb, blood of the lamb. It's all rubbish. Just words, words, words.

The devil keeps them satisfied with words. I'll tell you, brother, sister, you've understood the blood of Christ if you've taken sin seriously in your life. If every sin, there's a revulsion to it.

It says about Jesus that he hated iniquity. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. And so God blessed him with the oil of gladness above all others.

I believe the reason for all the depression and discouragement among Christians is because they don't hate sin. When I started hating sin, I got completely free from discouragement. That's Hebrews 1.9. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

So God anointed him with the oil of gladness above everybody else. And the more I love righteousness and hate iniquity, the more my life will be 100% free from depression, discouragement. And I used to be a tremendous slave to that once upon a time.

It'll be filled with the joy of the Lord all the time. It's all got to do with sin. Don't just accept it.

Yeah, in this world, we will be depressed and discouraged according to your faith. Be it unto you. It'll be like that.

But if you come to Jesus and say, Lord, you walked on this earth and you loved righteousness and hated iniquity, you were never depressed. You were never in a bad mood. Why do you accept this third-rate Christian life that the devil tells you is the only life you can live? Why not say, Lord, I want to accept the type of life you offer me in the scripture, not this third-rate Christian life that a lot of Christians around me are living.

Be a radical Christian. And the time to do that is when you're young. And stick to it.

You won't find many people going that way. It'll be a very lonely path, but it'll be a very blessed path. And ultimately, you'll find here and there a few people coming along with you.

I remember in my younger days, it was a very lonely path. I looked around in the assembly I used to go to, and I didn't find anybody preaching victory over sin. Nobody.

I didn't find a man whom I could look up to as a man of God. And I said, Lord, what shall I do? And the Lord said, look at me. If you find a godly example on earth, follow him like he follows me, like Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ.

But if you don't find such a godly example, Jesus said, follow me. So I learned one of the blessed things I learned early in my Christian life was to lean upon Jesus. The Song of Solomon was one of my favorite books.

Who is this leaning upon the beloved and comes out of the wilderness? And I learned to lean upon Jesus, to look at him. And now and then, as a young man, I would find a godly man. There was something radiant about that person, something Christ-like, something challenging about his ministry.

And I said, there's an example I can follow. But they were so rare. But the rest of the time, I kept looking at Jesus.

So what I want to say is, you're not going to find many people around you who want to go this way. It's going to be a pretty lonely path, but it's going to be very, very satisfying when you come to the end of your life. Determine.

Ask the Lord to give you a tremendous hatred towards sin. Where sin becomes, you have a revulsion to sin. You shrink from it, you know, like you would shrink from filth and dirty smells and anything ugly.

That even if you're permitted to sin, you won't do it. I mean, it's like if somebody tells you, OK, you can go and lick the toilet bowl if you like. You're permitted to lick the toilet bowl as much as you like.

I say, no, thank you. Supposing God were to say, OK, you're permitted to lust after women. No.

Can you see that? Are you avoiding lusting because, oh, I like, I want to do it, but God says, don't do it. I want to lick that toilet bowl, but Dad won't permit me. Is that why you avoid sin? Because your dad won't permit you? Well, it's good in the beginning.

You know, we've got to stop our children from eating stones and mud and dust and all that because they're babies. They don't know what's good for them. They may even lick the toilet bowl, for all you know.

But when they grow up, it's not because Dad or Mom told them not to do it. There's just a revulsion. And when you're growing up, you don't just avoid sin because, oh, the Bible, I want to do it, but the Bible says I can't do it.

Oh, how sad. No. You think that's why Jesus avoided sin? The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Dear brothers and sisters, let's take the Christian life seriously. God has need of you. I love those words.

You know, Jesus told his disciples, you know, when you go and get a donkey for me to ride on a few days before his crucifixion, if anybody asks you why you're losing that donkey, say the Lord has need of him. The Lord has need of him. That's an encouraging word to me.

A donkey? The Lord has need of him? Why not you, brother, sister? Why do you have such a feeling of inferiority? Oh, I'm so useless. I'm no good. I'm not gifted.

So what? You're at least better than a donkey, right? The Lord has need of you, brother, sister. The Lord has need of you. Don't let the devil tell you any lie.

The Lord has need of you. But be a radical Christian. Say, you'll mean more to me today than anything else.

I will not be like that rich young ruler. Let's pray. Let's bow our heads before God.

Heavenly Father, I think of these wonderful young people here. What tremendous potential for your kingdom. And how the devil would like to get a hold of every one of them and make them compromise somewhere or the other, make them cling on to some wretched tradition, make them cling on to some trinket of the world.

Open their eyes. Help us to see the values of God's kingdom. Pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/qgzEVBOaoO4.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/a-firm-grip-on-the-christian-life-the-blood-of-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net