

Accepted And Blessed By God

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of overcoming discouragement and self-condemnation by relying on the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus and the truth that believers are accepted in the beloved. It highlights the need to give thanks to God, maintain a spirit of gratitude, and remember that God's grace empowers us in our weaknesses. The message encourages believers to overcome Satan's accusations by declaring the victory of the blood of the Lamb and living a life of thankfulness and rejoicing in the Lord always.

Scripture: Revelation 12:11, Ephesians 1:6, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Revelation 3:21, 2 Chronicles 20:21

Topics: "Overcoming Discouragement", "The Power of Gratitude"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of overcoming discouragement and self-condemnation by relying on the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus and the truth that believers are accepted in the beloved. It highlights the need to give thanks to God, maintain a spirit of gratitude, and remember that God's grace empowers us in our weaknesses. The message encourages believers to overcome Satan's accusations by declaring the victory of the blood of the Lamb and living a life of thankfulness and rejoicing in the Lord always.

Transcript

I want to speak today on two things that I had a problem with when I was a new Christian and because I was not instructed properly in the church I attended. I had a tremendous problem with discouragement because I was frequently defeated. I didn't know how I could overcome.

Externally my life was good, but you know in our thoughts and attitudes it was a struggle. And I would come back to the Lord always and ask him to cleanse me with the blood. So I lived with a clear conscience before God all the time, but it was this endless circle of defeat and being cleansed and it led me to discouragement.

That was number one. And the second was it leads on from that to self-condemnation. Oh, I think other believers are so good and here I am such a bad testimony for the Lord.

But I want to testify today that one of the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit, which I experienced in a very vivid way nearly 50 years ago, and of going more intensely into the scriptures to see how much God has loved me, has delivered me from both of them. So I made a little poster here for myself which I keep in front of me all the time. Two no entry roads.

We all obey traffic rules, you know, when you see the no entry sign you never enter that road because it leads to collision. Here are these two no entry roads. Discouragement and self-condemnation.

Please keep this in your mind always. You, just like you obey traffic rules, obey God's rule, these are no entry roads. Discouragement and self-condemnation.

And make a decision today that you're going to obey God's traffic rules from now on. God is on your side against the devil. That's the thing that I keep reminding myself.

However much you've been defeated, God is your father and he's always on your side against the devil. That never changes, even if you're in the depths. And there are enough examples in the scriptures.

Consider the fact of Peter denying the Lord. Do you know who Jesus said he would deny before the father in the final day? He never said, if you commit adultery, I'll deny you before my father. Okay, you can repent of that and come back.

He never said, if you kill someone, I'll deny you before my father. But he said, if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my father. So denying Jesus before others to me was the greatest sin of all.

And Jesus allowed Peter to fall into that greatest sin of all. You turn with me for a moment to Luke's gospel in chapter 22, where Jesus spoke to Peter about this. And he said, Luke 22 and verse 31, if you turn in your Bibles, Luke 22 and verse 31, Simon, Simon, Jesus said to him, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat.

Okay, here's a picture of a battle going on in the heavenlies. Satan can't touch Peter and neither can he touch you and me. Please remember this.

Apply this to yourself. Put your name there. Satan has demanded permission to sift you, but I have prayed for you.

And he's still doing that. The Bible says Jesus is always praying for us. Never forget that.

Sometimes we tend to forget that at the right hand of the father, we have an advocate. He's not the adversary. The adversary is the devil.

We have an advocate on John chapter two, verse one. And he's always praying for us. And he says, yeah, I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

That's the most important thing that the Lord is praying for every one of us. Whatever else you may lose, you lose your money, you lose your health. The Lord says, I don't want you to lose your faith.

I don't think the Lord prays that we should not lose our money. He'll always provide enough for our needs. If you see God's kingdom first and his righteousness, he will provide for all your needs.

I mean, I've proved that in my life. I've been in full-time Christian work for 57 years and I'm 84 years old now. And I can testify before God that he's provided all my needs without my receiving a salary and without my sending prayer letters to anyone.

I've just trusted God like those early apostles did. And he's provided all my need in a poor country like India. And most of our churches are in the poor villages of India, extremely poor people.

And God has provided my need. That's all I can say. I'm taking care of my family, taking care of my children and enable them to get an education and everything else.

I can testify to that. And I want all of you to be able to testify to that, to your children and to others around you, that God provides all our need. He prays for us that our faith should not fail at any time.

That's why he prayed for Simon Peter. I have prayed for you. Please remember those words because it's true for us today.

Whenever you're discouraged or you feel condemned, these two things I told you, self-condemnation, discouragement, remember this word in Luke 22, 32. I, Jesus says, I have prayed for you. Will you please remember those words? I have prayed for you.

Five words. And it's true for us today. He ever lives, we read in Hebrews 7, 25, to make intercession for us.

You know, just like it says in Revelation 12, that the devil is always accusing us. The devil ever lives to accuse us before God. He's called the accuser of the brothers.

On the other side, he's the adversary. On the other side, Jesus ever lives to pray for us. And he prayed for Peter.

And he prayed that his faith would not fail. And listen to something interesting here. And he says, when you turn again, when you were turned around and you've come out of that failure, strengthen your brothers.

You who failed, you're going to be the one who's going to bless others. And Peter did not know how weak he was. Just like you and I, we boast sometimes, I'm going to live for the Lord.

And then he said, I'm ready to go to prison or death for you. And he meant it. But he said, Peter, I want to tell you something.

You don't realize how weak you are. Before the rooster crows today, you will have denied me three times. The worst sin of all, if you deny me before men, Jesus said, I will deny you before my father.

And he tells Peter, you're going to do that. Now, the thing that came to me when I read that, why didn't Jesus pray that Peter would not deny him? If you read the story there, you know, John knew the high priest, so he could go into the place where Jesus was being tried in the court. But when Peter came to the gate, they would not let him in.

And it says, John came to the gatekeeper, you read that in the gospels, and spoke to him and let Peter in. Just that one little incident. John came to the gatekeeper and let Peter in.

Have you thought of it? Supposing John had not seen Peter there, and Peter was not able to enter inside that gate, he would not have denied Jesus because all that denial three times was once he came into that courtyard. It was very simple for God to just stop John from coming from seeing Peter there at the gate. That would have saved Peter from denying the Lord.

Why didn't God arrange the circumstance like that? I'll tell you, Peter had to fail. Just like many Old Testament saints, God allows them to fail to help them to see their weakness and to humble them. There's

such a lot of pride in us, in every one of us, in you and me, which we don't even realize is the worst sin of all.

We can glory in the fact we don't commit adultery, we don't tell lies, and we don't steal money, and so many other things which we don't do. Praise the Lord for that. But there's a lot of hidden pride in all of us which we don't realize.

A lot of self-confidence, ability, particularly if we've been Christians for some years, we think, yeah, we can go on now. You know, I find that in preaching. It's very easy to not depend on the Lord when I preach.

It's very easy to, because I preach so often, say, I can do that. And the Lord says, you can't. Always remember all your life, even in preaching, even if you have preached for 100 years, that then you will still be like the branch in the tree, not able to produce a single fruit if you're cut off from the tree.

Even if you've been in the tree producing fruit for 50 years. I keep remembering that. Whenever I preach, I think of this picture, the branch in the tree.

I say, Lord, I want to be like that. And then I know your sap will flow into me. And I want to remember that.

And so there's this tremendous temptation to have self-confidence. I can do it, because I've been overcoming for some time, and then we fail. So Peter needed his self-confidence to be shattered.

And I believe that's why he allowed John to see Peter there and go and allow him to come inside the gate, as a result of which Peter denied the Lord three times. And Jesus did not pray, Father, please prevent Peter from denying me. There you understand the reason why he allows you and me sometimes to fall.

Is it because God is not interested? Is it because God cannot stop it? Is it God could have think of some of the circumstances in your past life where maybe you fell into some sin, and God could have easily arranged some circumstances at that time that would have prevented you from falling? Why didn't he do that? It's like accidents we have had. Some of us have lost children and relatives and loved ones. And we wonder, why didn't God hinder that? God could have easily stopped that accident.

I believe, if we can believe Romans 8, 28, that everything God does is with a purpose. And it's not something he has to think of now. The Bible says he chose us before the foundation of the world.

Before Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, it says in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. There is another sentence before that in the beginning. That's Ephesians 1, 4. He chose us before the foundation of the world.

So the first verse in the Bible is not Genesis 1, verse 1. The first verse in the Bible is Ephesians 1, verse 4. Please turn to that verse. Ephesians 1, verse 4, it says God chose us in Christ before Genesis 1, verse 1, before the world was created. So I say Ephesians 1, verse 4 is the first verse in the Bible.

What is that? Before creating the heaven and earth. I wish we would be gripped by this. The first thing that God did was choose me, choose you.

That can bring such a tremendous confidence and assurance into our life to remember that always. The devil doesn't want us to know that. I thank God we have the scriptures.

I think of, you know, the scriptures were printed only in the late 1400s, 600 years ago, or less than 600 years ago. Imagine before that. You couldn't go to a store and get a Bible.

You had to hear by word of mouth what Peter said or James said or John said from others, and it's passed down. Sometimes it is not accurate. And in a moment of need, there was no book I could turn to.

How blessed we are today that we have the Bible in our own language. And I'm surprised that there are believers who don't seek to read the Bible every day. I remember a brother in one of our churches.

I said, do you read the Bible every day? He said, oh brother, sometimes I'm so busy. I said, do you eat your food every day? Do you sleep every day? Do you really believe that eating and sleeping is more important than getting in touch with God every day? You don't have 15 minutes a day to spend with God in his word. Well, you'll never progress in your life, brother.

I'm not trying to condemn you, but it's like a child who will not eat. And see, you've got to eat to be strong, and that's what I'm saying. So here is a wonderful word.

He has chosen us in Christ before Genesis 1 verse 1, before he created the world and with a purpose that we should be holy. Do you have a desire to be holy? My dear brother, sister, let me tell you, it was God who had that desire first. That's what it says in that verse.

He chose you not just to go to heaven. So often people think going to heaven is the end of our life, the end result of being saved. And we tell, the gospel is sometimes preached like this.

You want to go to hell or you want to go to heaven? I praise God I'm free from that. I can honestly say before the Lord, I am not interested in going to heaven. I've said that to the Lord many times.

Father in heaven, I want to be with you and Jesus, the Holy Spirit for all eternity. I don't care I told the Lord Jesus once, I said, Lord, I'd be happy to be in hell for all eternity if you're there, because hell will become heaven for me. I'm not bothered about the fire and the worms and everything else.

It's the presence of Jesus Christ that makes heaven for me. Even here on earth, right now, heaven has begun. Put Christ in the center.

And God's desire is he chose us before the foundation of the world not to go to heaven. What does it say in that verse? That we should be holy without blame in love. He predestined us to be his children according to the pleasure of his will.

And there's a beautiful verse in Ephesians 1 verse 6, which comes out only in the King James Version. It's a beautiful expression, which I want you to remember all your life. He chose us as we read before the world was created.

This, as I said, is the first verse of the Bible, Ephesians 1.4. Before the Genesis 1.1, he chose us to be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to be his children. That's not the result of my choice. Some years ago, I accepted Christ 64, 65 years ago, but long before that, millions of years ago, he chose me.

He knew my name. He put my name in the book of life and yours too. And he chose me to be his child.

And that was the good pleasure of his will. I said, I decided to accept Jesus. Yes, but long before I decided, he decided to choose me.

Both are true. Of course, one cannot be without the other. It's like the two wires that touch in an electrical switch when the light comes on.

One wire alone is not enough. All that you do when you put on a switch is put the two wires together and they touch. And that's God's will and my will.

The moment that they touch, I'm saved. But God's will was first. The electricity flows from there.

And as soon as it touched, I was saved. But it was the good pleasure of his will. And here's the expression which I want you to think of.

This was to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in his beloved son. That's the expression which has come to my heart many, many, many times. I'm accepted in the beloved son of God.

I'm accepted. I'm accepted. You know how orphans in orphan homes feel so discouraged because they've never had a father or mother to hug them.

And many Christians act just like orphans. They're discouraged because they don't realize they've been accepted in the beloved. Those who have adopted children sometimes say that the adopted children, their own children also, they feel a little odd.

And sometimes an adopted child may sit up at night in the middle of the night in bed wondering, will daddy and mommy send me out because I'm not really their child. It's not like that with God. Never, never, never.

He has accepted us in the beloved. Please remember that, dear brother and sister, in the times when the devil tries to discourage you. Remember this expression, Ephesians 1.6, I have been accepted in the beloved son.

It doesn't mean that I can do what I like. No, but it begins with acceptance. Then God changes me and makes my will to be conformed to his will.

I'm not teaching that whether we like it or not, God's chosen us to be with him forever. I don't believe in that type of predestination. I see, you know, recently I had a discussion with someone about this matter of once saved, always saved, which I don't believe in, about predestination and the free will of man.

And I pointed out to him this verse. It says in 2 Timothy 1.19. It's a very interesting verse, 2 Timothy 1.19. It speaks about the foundation of our salvation. The firm foundation of God for our salvation stands, unshakable.

And he's got God's seal on this. And that seal has got two sides to it. The top of it, it says the Lord knows those who are his.

The bottom part of the seal says everyone who names the name of the Lord must abstain from sin, from wickedness. That is the balance, predestination. The Lord knows those who are his, free will.

Everyone who names the Lord must choose to stay away from sin. The thing we see here is that the seal, the top side is where it says the Lord knows those who are his. I can't see that.

I can't see the top side of the seal in your life or my life. That's God sees that the Lord knows those who are his. I don't.

But I see the bottom side of the same seal, which says those who name the name of the Lord stay away from wickedness. That's how I know that's a child of God. That's how I know I'm a child of God.

Not that I'm perfect, but I try to avoid sin. That proves God has chosen me. That's the balance.

In one verse, you have the balance between the predestination of God and the free will of man. And why has God predestined us? To turn with me to Romans in chapter eight, the very well-known verse Romans 8, 28, which many, many believers know. It's a wonderful comforting verse.

God makes everything work together for good to those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. And some people stop there. We can lose a lot by memorizing verses and not reading the context in which that verse is spoken.

It's good to memorize verses, but now and then go to that verse and see the context in which it is spoken. We know, and it's good to know that. Romans 8, 28, God causes, that means God arranges our circumstances to make everything work together, not individually.

One individual thing, one accident is not going to work for my good. One loss, financial loss, or one disturbance that came in my life, or one failure is not going to work for my good. But it says God causes all things to work together.

When you add it all together, everything that God allows in my life is going to work for my good. That I believe. That individual thing may look as it is not working my good.

You may know some individual thing that happened in your life, some calamity or something wrong, which did not work for your good. But that along with all the other things God allows in your life, here's a promise from God, it will work for your good. I praise God for that.

Very often we don't read scripture exactly, and that's why we have a problem. All things work for my good. That's not what it says.

It says all things work together. Everything works together for my good. And the other thing is that good is what? It's not to make me wealthier, or healthier, or more famous, or more gifted.

No. The greatest good that God can do for us, it says in the next verse, verse 29, is to make us like Jesus. To conform us to the image of Christ.

So all these things are working together, not to make me wealthier or healthier, but to make me more Christ-like. Perhaps a little poorer financially, so that I can be more Christ-like. Perhaps having a sickness that's not healed, so that I can be more Christ-like.

You know Paul had a sickness that he was not healed from. You all know that in 2 Corinthians 12, it says he had a thorn in his flesh. He calls it a messenger of Satan.

Do any of you have a thorn in your flesh, which the devil's put into your body? Well, you're in fellowship with Paul. What a better person to be in fellowship with than that. That Paul had a thorn in his flesh.

A messenger of Satan. Is there a messenger of Satan bothering you? A thorn in your flesh that never seems to be, you're not able to pull out? Well, be comforted that Paul, the greatest apostle, whom God used mightily, had it. He was taken up to the third heaven once, but he had this thorn in the flesh and he prayed.

And God said, no, I'm not going to remove it. He prayed again. Lord, take it away.

This is bothering me. God says, no, no answer. He prayed again.

It says he prayed three times. And if he had not got an answer, he would have prayed 3000 times. It's not just that he prayed three times.

He prayed till he got an answer. And God's answer was, I am not going to take away that sickness. I'm not going to remove that problem from your life because Paul, you have been so blessed that you're in danger of becoming proud.

And if you become proud, it's an unchangeable law of mind, God says, that I have resisted. 1 Peter 5.5, God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. And he said, Paul, I can give you grace only if you're humble.

And you have been so mightily used. You have planted churches. You've done miracles.

You raised the dead. You have written scripture. You're in tremendous danger of becoming proud.

Now, all of us may not have done all those fantastic things, but the danger of pride is there in every one of us. Some little thing we do for God and somebody appreciates it and immediately we become proud. Pride is so close to us that no matter how much we try to avoid it, it comes up like that without even our expecting it.

And the Lord says, I want to keep you from becoming proud. And one way I can keep you from becoming proud is by giving you this little affliction in your body, this little problem in your family, this little problem in your life. And so what did Paul say? He prayed three times, he got an answer.

And if he had not got an answer in three times, he would have prayed 3000 times. The point is not that he prayed three times, he prayed until he got an answer from God. And today we have the scripture.

Paul did not have a scripture to turn to. Today we have the scriptures, which tells us that sometimes God allows us and his answer is, my grace is sufficient for you. Please turn with me to that verse in second Corinthians in chapter 12.

When we read scripture carefully, we learn a lot. Second Corinthians 12, seven, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations I was getting to keep me from exalting myself. Please remember this little expression, second Corinthians 12, seven, to keep me from exalting myself.

Whenever you find some problem not removed in your life, in your family, some sickness not gone, some unexpected accident, something, remember Romans 8, 28 and 29 together. God makes all things work together for good to those who love him. And that good is that we might become a little more like Christ.

Not that we might be richer or healthier or wealthier or any such thing, but that we might become a little more like Christ, a little humbler, a little purer, a little more compassionate towards other people who are suffering. You know, the people who can have compassion when someone else is suffering is the one who's gone through that suffering himself. You know, someone who's lost a child will have much more compassion on someone else who's lost a child.

I will not lost a child, can go and encourage them and comfort them, but not as well as someone who's lost a child himself. And so God, one day when we get to heaven, we will see how God used all these circumstances to make us his servants. And that day we will have no question.

We say, Lord, I didn't understand this on earth. I was questioning, but now I see it all. You had a purpose in using me, making me a blessing to others.

And if we can have that heavenly vision right now, we will not be anxious or we will not condemn ourselves or feel that, why is God allowing this in my life? 2 Corinthians 12, 7, to keep me from exalting myself that was given to me. That's the first word. It was a gift.

Imagine getting a gift from a brother for your birthday, let's say, beautifully wrapped in a fancy box and wrapped with a nice ribbon and you open it and inside it is a thorn. You say, what type of gift is this? That's what it says here. God gave me a gift all wrapped up nice.

I opened the box and inside it is a thorn, a thorn that's poking me in the flesh all the time. So never forget that word. It was given to me by whom? God.

That was given to me. Read every word of scripture, a thorn in the flesh, but it was also a messenger of Satan. Can a messenger of Satan become a gift of God? Have you had some messenger of Satan afflict you in your family or in your life? Here it says that God turned it into a gift from him.

What is there that almighty God cannot do? What is there that our heavenly father cannot do? We pray to him, our father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Deliver us from all evil. Thy will be done in my life as it is done in heaven.

He can do it. And that deliverance from evil may not be the way you think, but he'll do it. The greatest evil he wants to deliver us from is pride.

Pride is the one thing that prevents God from being able to bless us. It's a law. Just like it's a law that water always flows down.

You can't make water go up. Gravity pulls things down. In the same way, here is a law of God, which is unchangeable.

God resists the proud. And it doesn't matter who it is. It's a law of God.

He cannot change it. When the devil told Jesus to jump off the temple, the law of gravity would not be suspended just because it was Jesus jumping off the temple. No, the law of gravity would have pulled it down.

He would have come crashing down and died. And so he told the devil, thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God. So God's laws are not going to change just because you're a fine believer.

If you are proud, God has to resist you. That's a law. Please remember that.

He cannot change it for anybody. He doesn't change the law of gravity, not even for his own son. And he won't change the law of gravity for you and me.

It'll always pull people down. And pride will always pull people down. But here's another law.

The same one Peter 5 says, he gives grace to the humble. So that's why I believe we should pursue humility more than anything else in life. There's a great verse which I like to turn people to in the book of Zephaniah.

I hope you both read the Old Testament also now and then. The Old Testament has got some wonderful verses. Zephaniah chapter 2. How many of you have noticed this verse? Many of you read the Bible, but have you noticed this verse? Zephaniah chapter 2 and verse 3. It blessed me once, but I didn't get it the first time I read it.

Many years later when I read it, it blessed me. Zephaniah chapter 2 verse 3. I hope you all know where Zephaniah is, and I hope you read it. You know you're going to meet Zephaniah one day in heaven, and he's going to ask you, did you read my book? And don't say, where was that? You say, I don't read three, four pages, and you didn't have time to read it? Read it.

You're going to meet Haggai. You're going to meet Habakkuk. All these folks in heaven, you better read their books before you get to heaven.

Zephaniah chapter 2 verse 3. It's an exhortation to those who are already humble. Everybody, all you humble of the Lord, seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth. Are you a humble brother? Praise the Lord.

Here's an exhortation for you, all you humble brothers and sisters. Seek the Lord, and what should you seek for? The middle of that verse, seek for more humility. Imagine that.

You're already humble, and he's telling you in verse 3, seek for more humility. So every brother here who feels he's quite humble, the Lord has got an exhortation for you. Seek for more humility.

In other words, humility is an endless pursuit. We have to keep on seeking for humility till the end of our lives, more and more and more and more. It's an endless pursuit.

All you humble of the earth. This is not for everybody. It's for the humble people in this church.

Seek for more humility. Please remember that all your life, and God helps us. And one way God helped Paul to get more humility was by giving him a thorn in the flesh.

And listen to this. Let's turn back to 2 Corinthians 12 and verse 7. There was given me this thorn in the flesh to keep me from exalting myself. Thank God that he's on our side to prevent us from exalting ourselves.

I can't do it on my own. I want to be humble, but God has to help me. And sometimes he helps me by giving me a little thorn in the flesh.

I've experienced that a number of times, a little thorn in the flesh. And God says, I'm using you. And you tend to be proud.

I have to keep you humble. I said, thank you, Lord. I wept and thanked God.

Thank you, Lord, for caring for me so much that you never wanted me to be proud. And you allow this thing, which sometimes we wonder, I'm a child of God. Why does God allow this? Your answer is here.

He wants to keep you humble so that he can keep on giving you his grace, because his grace is much more important than that other thing that you lost. His grace is more important than your health, which you lost. And then he explains the reason.

He says, I prayed for it three times and the Lord said no. Instead, the Lord said, verse 9, my grace, this is a very well-known verse, but people don't know the full verse. My grace is sufficient for you, 2 Corinthians 12, verse 9, because my power is perfected in weakness.

And I learned from that verse that God's grace is his power. For many years, I didn't understand what God's grace was. It was sort of a vague word, grace.

What does it mean? We use it so often, grace, grace, grace. What does it mean? This verse tells me. There's no verse in the Bible that explains grace as clearly as this one.

Grace is God's power, and he can give it only to the humble. God gives his grace to the humble. So my grace is more than enough for you, because my power will take care of all your weakness.

Read that verse like that. What is your weakness? What is your limitation? Are you shy? I remember when I first became a Christian 64 years ago, and I wanted to witness to others. I was so shy and hesitant to tell others about Christ, and I said, Lord, you can give me power to make me bold, and I prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and God did it.

Then I could stand on the streets as a naval officer. In those days, that's what I was. I'd take off my uniform, and during non-working hours, stand on the street, and people who worked under me would be there in front of me laughing at me, and my senior officers would pass by and wonder what crazy thing I'm doing on the street, and the Lord gave me boldness.

I learned to preach on the street when I was 23 years old. I was too young to be invited to speak in the church I was attending, so I learned to preach on the streets, and I prayed, Lord, please give me power to overcome my shyness and my lack of courage. God says, I'll give you my grace.

My grace will be perfected in whatever your weakness is. It was a great verse, and then Paul says, therefore, verse 9, I will boast in my weakness. Praise God that I'm weak, because when I recognize my weakness, and God allows me to have a thorn in the flesh that makes me more weak, His power will be manifested in me.

This is one of the apparent contradictions in God's way of dealing with us. He makes us weak to empower us. We think He should give us some shaking in our body or some supernatural experience to empower us.

No. He makes you weak to empower you, and I've learned that. I feel so weak sometimes.

I'll tell you honestly, before I get up to speak somewhere, I feel so utterly weak, and I said, Lord, how in the world am I going to speak here? I don't know what to say, and I feel so weak, and the Lord says, that's how I prepare you to preach my message. Then you won't be depending on your own cleverness and your

own ability. You recognize your weakness, you will lean upon me like the branch that says, even though I have produced fruit for 50 years, and I cut off now after 50 years of producing fruit, if I'm cut off from the tree, I die.

I will produce no more fruit. No matter how many years I produce fruit, I have to remain in the tree forever. That's been a great truth for me.

Without me, you can do nothing. Like the branch cut off from the vine will produce no fruit, you can produce no fruit apart from me. That's why God allows us to be weak.

That's why He allows thorns to come in our flesh. He makes everything work together for good to make us like Christ. So I was talking about why God, why Jesus did not pray that Peter should not deny Him.

Did He pray to the Father? Oh, Father, don't let Peter deny me. Isn't that a good prayer to pray? If I'm thinking that one brother is in danger of denying the Lord, he's in a provocative circumstance in his office, or in some trial he's going through, and there's a danger of his denying the Lord, and I pray that he will not deny it. Jesus knew that.

He knew ahead of time, Peter's going to deny me, but He did not pray that Peter would not deny Him. He did not pray that John would not come to the gate to let Peter in, let Peter stay outside the gate so he never denies me. Because all that denial happened after Peter came inside the gate of the high priest's court yard.

God could have easily stopped that. God could have easily stopped something that happened in your life. Think back to something that happened in your life, and you wonder why didn't God stop that? He allowed you to fail.

He allowed Peter to fail, because that way Peter would realize his helplessness. That was Peter's thorn in the flesh, that he failed the Lord, and he went out and wept bitterly, and then he was ready for Pentecost. You know what prepared Peter for Pentecost? It was not just the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and you see that in Acts chapter 2, where Peter got up on the day of Pentecost after being baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in those unknown tongues that everybody heard in their own language.

What a fantastic experience. And then you read that sermon of Peter's in Acts chapter 2, less than 15 minutes. How many minutes do you think Peter took to preach that Acts chapter 2 sermon, the first gospel sermon? Less than 15 minutes.

And what is the result? 3,000 Jews were converted. I mean, if I converted one Jew, I would get excited. Imagine converting 3,000 Jews, and that too, not with a powerful one-hour sermon with miracles or no miracles, no healings, just a 15-minute sermon.

And you read that sermon, and it doesn't seem to be such a stirring, powerful sermon. You read Acts chapter 2 and see what a stirring, powerful sermon is. It seems to be such an ordinary sermon, quoting various scriptures and saying various things.

And you say, how in the world did this sermon, which looks so cheap and ordinary, convert 3,000 people? I'll tell you why. It was spoken by a weak man who was helplessly leaning upon God. And it came through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, not because of Peter's cleverness or persuasion or any such thing.

You know, we sometimes unconsciously depend on all these human abilities we have to serve the Lord. And the Lord says, it's not like that. I have to make you weak before I can use you.

Again and again, the Lord has taught me that through many years. I've been preaching now. I started preaching when I was 23.

It's 60 years since I started preaching. And I've been preaching regularly all these 60 years. And I've seen that the Lord has to make me, even today, make me weak.

Many times, get up to speak, and I don't even know what I'm going to say. Now, I wouldn't encourage people to do that themselves unless you've already got a solid foundation in scripture. In the early days, it was not like that.

I had to prepare all my notes down carefully because I didn't want to waste people's time. But as time has gone on, the Lord has said, more important than all that is to lean upon me in helplessness. And the Lord brings me to that place of being helpless, hoping I have to face a particular situation.

I remember when I mentioned this many times, how religious people in India once took me to court, Christians, because I exposed their wrong doctrines. And the day I stepped in, the Lord said to me, don't be afraid. Religious people took me also to court 2,000 years ago.

You're walking in my footsteps. Boy, that encouraged me so tremendously. I'm walking in Jesus' footsteps, even when other people accuse me falsely.

Thank you, Lord, for this privilege of fellowship with you. Everything is meant to make me weak. Anything that God allows in your life to make you weak, thank God for it.

God gives his grace to the humble. And it's not easy to make us humble. And God has to do so many circumstances.

So, Peter preached that 15-minute sermon, and I'm sure he was the most surprised of all when 3,000 people were converted. And if somebody had gone to Peter after that message and patted him on the back and say, hey, Peter, what a fantastic ministry that was. Man, 3,000 people converted.

And Peter would have said, that wasn't me. You know what I did a few weeks ago, six weeks ago? I denied Jesus three times. He never forgot that all his life, that God was not using him because he was perfect.

Among all the disciples, nobody had denied the Lord three times like Peter. That was his preparation for Pentecost. He was humbled so that when God used him mightily, he would not get fucked up.

God has humbled me in so many situations in my past life, so that if God uses me somewhere today, I say, Lord, I know what I am. I know left to myself what a total failure I am and how I will let you down so badly. So, I cannot glory in anything.

He has to do that, my brothers and sisters. If God is to use you, he has to first humble you. In Peter's case, it was with the worst possible sin, denying Jesus not just once, but three times.

And the Lord says, now I can use you. Now you'll never be fucked up. And years later, even 30 years later, when he's 60 years old, when God uses him, Peter would still remember, I remember how I denied

the Lord.

He'd never forget it for the rest of his life. Sometimes God allows some little event to happen in your life where you denied the Lord so badly or you let down the Lord so badly. He allows that memory to remain in your life to keep you humble.

I've got memories like that, where I let down the Lord so badly in my backslidden, unconverted days, and even after being converted in periods of backsliding. And I said, Lord, in those early years, I didn't know you well, and I didn't have other brothers to encourage me. And I slid back and I remember it now.

And then I'm reminded of that whenever God uses me. I say, Lord, I know what I was left to myself. I'm still the same.

I'll fail you even today, left to myself, but thank God you don't let me down. I've been accepted in the beloved. Don't forget that phrase, Ephesians 1.6, I've been accepted in the beloved.

I love that phrase. I say that to myself. That's how I overcome discouragement and self-condemnation.

I have been accepted in the beloved. Did God know all about the stupid things I do on the failures of my life? He knew all about it, but yet He chose me in the beloved. Say that to the devil.

Learn to give your testimony to the devil. Let me show you this verse finally, Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12.

The devil is called the accuser of the brethren in verse 10. And he accuses them day and night. He's just waiting, looking for somebody to slip up.

And he says, God, see what that person claims to be your child. That person living in Beaver Springs, see what he did right now. That's your child.

That's called accusation before God. And it says here, these people who were accused, verse 11, they overcame him. You know how to overcome those accusations of Satan? It's not by saying, I promise God I won't do it again.

You can't make that promise. It says they overcame him by the blood of the lamb. Never forget that.

They overcame him not by their determination to be better in future. Yes, we want to be better in future. But they overcame him by saying the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed me from all my sin.

And it says it's not just that they believed it. It says in Revelation 12, 11, they overcame Satan by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony. That word of testimony is not your testimony in the Sunday meeting.

It's the testimony you give to the devil. I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, how many of you have given your testimony to the devil? Have you ever told the devil, Satan, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me from all sin. You cannot condemn me.

I know I slipped up this morning, but I confessed it and I turned around from it. And the blood of Jesus has cleansed me. You cannot condemn me today.

You cannot condemn me for the rest of my life about that foolish thing I did this morning. Do you have that boldness? Learn it today, Revelation 12, 11. They overcame Satan by the blood of the lamb and by the word of the testimony they gave to Satan.

And they did not love their life to death. Praise God. God wants to make every one of you an overcomer.

So please remember this again. Never enter these roads. Never, never, never.

You have been accepted in the beloved. If you slip up, come back to the Lord immediately. Don't wait.

Don't condemn yourself. The blood of Jesus cleanses you. We can be overcomers.

I want to tell you in Jesus' name. Let me tell you, I have no hesitation in telling you this as a servant of the Lord. Every one of you, every one of you, God wants you to be an overcomer.

He wants you, Jesus says, to him that overcometh, Revelation 3, 21, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and sat down with the father on his throne. What a tremendous privilege. Not because we are worthy, but because God chose us before the foundation of the world.

That's not, that doesn't mean I'll take advantage of his goodness. No. I'm humbled when I think that God chose a wretched sinner like me before the world was created and chose me knowing the many ways in which I would slip up and fall, but he forgave me, forgave me, forgave me, and humbled me and used me.

And he does that with you as well. Let's have a tremendous spirit of thankfulness, dear brothers and sisters, a thankful spirit. I never want to lose that thankfulness deep down in my heart towards the Lord for all that he's done.

Please, I urge you, never lose that spirit of thankfulness. You know, it says in 2 Chronicles 20 how Jehoshaphat was in a battle and the Lord said, I've given you the victory. So you know what Jehoshaphat did? You read that in 2 Chronicles 20 sometimes.

He sent, he didn't send the people with the bows and arrows in front of the army. He sent people who raised their hands and say, praise the Lord, praise the Lord. And they won the victory.

They won the victory by praising the Lord. I've learned that. Give thanks to God, even when you can't understand many things.

Lord, I praise you. You're still on the throne. Jesus Christ has got all authority in heaven and earth.

That hasn't changed. There are certain unchangeable things. The blood of Christ has cleansed me from all my sin.

I've been accepted in the beloved, Ephesians 1, 6. Satan was defeated on the cross once and for all, 2,000 years ago. God is on the throne and he'll always be on the throne. And he's my heavenly father.

What do I have to worry about? Something went wrong, I lost a little money, I lost a little bit of health, but God is on the throne. Satan's been defeated. I've been accepted in the beloved.

So I shall continually praise God and I shall give thanks and everything at all times. I shall rejoice in the Lord always, 24 seven. That's our life, brothers and sisters.

Let's live in that every day from now on. Make a new beginning today to live that life of rejoicing and thankfulness. Let us pray.

Please bow your heads with me. The Lord has spoken to you today. Ask him to confirm this word in your heart, to write it deep in your heart that you'll never forget it.

Heavenly father, this is our prayer. We want to be 100% free from discouragement and self-condemnation. We want to be 100% sure and know and confess that we've been accepted in the beloved, that the blood of Jesus has cleansed us.

It doesn't mean that we will take advantage of sin easily because of that. In fact, we will hate to sin because of the tremendous price you paid to free us from it. Help us to be grateful all our days.

Bless every single brother and sister here who heard me this morning. Bless this church, make it a powerful testimony for you in that area, Lord. Bless the elders.

Pray that your name will be glorified through New Life Fellowship. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/_rSzyBH4O4.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/accepted-and-blessed-by-god/>

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