

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 8

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of teaching and living out all that Jesus commanded as essential to fulfilling the Great Commission.

Duration: 25:35

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Following Christ", "Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of following all that Jesus commanded, not just in words but in actions, focusing on repentance, following Christ's example, and living a life of progressive sanctification. It highlights how Jesus, though fully God, emptied Himself of privileges to be an example for us, and how we are called to purify ourselves daily by following His footsteps. The message encourages believers to seek Christ as the ultimate example in every aspect of life, relying on the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment.

Transcript

We continue our study today on the theme of all that Jesus taught. We've been looking in past days on Matthew chapter 28 verse 20 which I call as the neglected part of the great commission that we have to teach those who are born again, Christians, every single thing that Jesus commanded. Teach them to do it and we must not be satisfied if you're a Christian leader or preacher or shepherd until your flock is actually doing what Jesus commanded.

Not just one or two things, but every single thing. Until everyone in your flock loves all their enemies, blesses everyone who curses them, is free from the love of money, free from anger, free from lusting with their eyes, your job is not completed as a Christian leader. It's not enough to get them to say, my sins are all forgiven, I'm on my way to heaven.

That is an incomplete fulfillment of the great commission. Unfortunately, there's a lot of lack of completion in the great commission that the Lord has given us. I believe we must be honest with scripture.

If you believe that Jesus said these words, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me, Matthew 28, verse 18. And if I submit to that authority, if I say, Lord, I am not here to preach the gospel that I think is right. You've got all authority in heaven and on earth and you've got all authority over me, Matthew 28, verse 18.

And you have commanded me to go and therefore I go, verse 19. And you commanded me to go and not just make converts, but make disciples who put Christ first in every area of their life. You've called me to baptize them in the name of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And then after that, you've commanded me because I'm under your authority to teach them to do every single thing that you've commanded me by doing it first in my life and then teaching others to do it. And then I can claim your promise in Matthew 28, verse 20, that you will be with me till the end of the age as I seek to do this ministry. This is God's will for us.

And as we go around proclaiming this message, then we are teaching people what Jesus taught and will complete the Great Commission. Otherwise, we're doing an unfinished job. So that's what we've been looking at in these past days, the things that Jesus commanded.

We started at Matthew 4, the very first words that Jesus spoke after his anointing, a number of passages there. And if you have a red letter Bible that shows the words of Jesus in red, you'll be easily be able to go through the Gospels and see all the things that Jesus taught, all the things that he commanded, which we are to teach every single person. So we may move today to Matthew 4, in verse 19, which is the next thing we read of Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 4, where he said to Peter and Andrew, whom he saw casting a net by the sea, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Now in our last study, we saw him saying repent. So the first step is repentance. And the next step is to follow him.

In other words, repentance, as I said last time, was a turning around and about turn. I spent my life following after money, earthly things, following after men, perhaps, or women or whatever it is. And now I turn around from all that and follow Jesus Christ.

Repentance is the turning around and following is running the race behind him. We run the race, looking unto Jesus, Hebrews 12, verse 1 and 2, the author and finisher of our faith. He does not ask us to run a race that he himself did not run.

He came to earth as a man, emptied himself, we read in Philippians, chapter 2 and verse 5, of equality with God. Philippians 2, verse 6. He did not regard equality with God as something to be held on to tightly, but emptied himself not of his person as God. That God can never do.

God can never cease to be God any more than you and I can cease to be a human being. God will always remain God. When Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, came to this earth, he was still God.

That's why he could accept worship. Seven times we read in the Gospels that people worshiped him and he accepted it, unlike the angels in heaven, unlike Peter when Cornelius tried to worship him. Jesus accepted it readily because he was God.

He had a right to be worshiped. He forgave sins, which only God can do. We can tell people God forgives their sins, but Jesus forgave them directly.

He says, I forgive you. He was God, but what did he empty himself of? He emptied himself of those privileges he had as God. For example, God can never be tempted, the Bible says in James 1. But we already saw in Matthew 4 how Jesus was tempted.

That's one of the privileges he gave up. That's what he emptied himself. He would be tired and he would sleep in a boat.

God is never tired. Jesus was hungry. God is never hungry.

There are many things Jesus gave up. He had the privilege to call 72,000 angels to defend him in the Garden of Gethsemane, but he would not call them. He emptied himself of that power.

The resources and privileges he had as God, he gave up. When he was on earth, he even said, I don't even know the date of my second coming. He had given up that knowledge, which he now has, now that he's in heaven.

But when he was on earth, even that he did not know. That omniscience, knowing everything that God had, he had emptied himself. And he had to go near a fig tree to see whether there was fruit on it.

God can see whether there's a fruit on a fig tree from a million miles away, but Jesus had to go near it. There are many examples like this that show us that Jesus emptied himself of the privileges of being God, but not of being God himself. That's why he could be tempted.

Why did he do that? Because only then could he be an example for us and say to us, follow me. The very first words we read after he spoke on repentance in Matthew 4, 17 is follow me. Now think of this.

If an angel from heaven came and wanted to teach us how to swim, and he flies across the swimming pool and says, follow me. Can you follow him? Can an angel teach you how to swim? Impossible. You will have to say to him, hey angel, get rid of your wings first, take a body like mine that sinks in the water, that's pulled down by gravity, and then teach me how to swim.

In other words, become like me, take a body like mine, which is constantly pulled down by gravity 24 hours a day, and then show me how to swim, then I can follow your example. Now use that illustration. If Jesus came to earth and lived with all the resources he had as God, he could never be tempted.

I mean the devil wouldn't come anywhere near him. He could always just walk as God and says to me, follow me. That would be exactly like an angel with wings flying across the swimming pool and saying, follow me.

It would be taunting me to urge me to do something that he knows I cannot do. God doesn't do that. Jesus became, we read in Hebrews chapter 2, in all things exactly like his brothers.

Hebrews chapter 2, verse 17. In order to become our high priest before God, it says in Hebrews 2.17, he had to be made in all matters, in all things, exactly like his brothers. And we are his brothers.

Those who received him as Lord become his brothers. And therefore, he can say to us, follow me. In Hebrews 4 and verse 15, it says, this high priest can sympathize with our struggles in temptation.

You know, it's a struggle to overcome temptation. It's in the moment of temptation that we realize how weak we are. We are so weak when it comes to temptation that even a little feather can knock us down.

One look at a pretty woman can make us sin. We can sin so easily when we have to tell a lie in order to get through some examination or certificate or something like that. Sign something false.

Just a feather is enough to knock us down into sin. Pride. We've done something good and immediately we can become proud.

We're knocked down by a feather. We are so weak. Think of a man whom you touch with a feather and he falls down.

How weak he is. That's how weak we are when it to temptation. And here we read of a high priest who can sympathize with our weakness.

Why? Because he was tempted in all points as we are. In all things. That's one thing.

As we are and yet did not sin. Never fell. He was made like us, Hebrews 2, 17, in all things.

He was tempted like us in all things, Hebrews 4, 15. Put these two things together and you see that Jesus Christ has every right to say to us, follow me. We can never turn around and say to him, Lord, you don't know what I'm going through.

He'll say, I know very well because I became a man like you, 100 percent man. The trouble with a lot of Christians is they have accepted Jesus Christ as 100 percent God, unlike some other cult groups. But they've not accepted Jesus Christ as 100 percent man.

And that is as much a false teaching and heresy as to reject that he's 100 percent God. The truth is in a balanced acceptance of both. He was not half God and half man, like some people think.

50 percent God, 50 percent man. And by the way, the Bible never uses the expression God-man. That's never used of Jesus Christ.

He was fully God and fully man. And when he came to earth, he lived on earth as a man. And he ascended up into God's presence, the Father's presence, as a man so that the Holy Spirit, who knows truth better than you and me, says concerning Christ in 1 Timothy and chapter 2, in verse 5. And this is in your Bible.

If you believe it is God's word, 1 Timothy 2, verse 5. There is one God and one mediator between God and man. And God and man. Who is that? Not the God-man, but the man, Christ Jesus.

He became a man and he's forever a man. Let me put it like this. When Christ as God became man on earth, he did not cease to be God.

When he ascended to heaven, he did not cease to be man. That is the full truth, if you want to understand it. And that is why when he lived on earth with our limitations, tempted like us in all things, and struggling against temptation, he can say to us, follow me.

Walk in my footsteps. Deny yourself like I denied myself. Take up the cross, die to yourself every day as I died to myself every day.

Was it easy for Christ to overcome temptation? Is it easy for you to murder? Etc. We may not find it difficult to overcome. It may be very easy for you to overcome the temptation to kill somebody.

But there are other subtler things, particularly in our thought life, which is very difficult to overcome. Sexually dirty thoughts, anxiety, bitterness, jealousy, grudges, pride, an unforgiving spirit, love of money.

So many of these things that are inward are very difficult to overcome.

We got to be face up to it. Anger, for example. But did Jesus find it easy? Or did he find it easier than us? Some people think that because he was so pure, he found it much easier.

So it's difficult for us to follow him. He didn't know what we go through. Well, let me use an illustration.

Think of someone who's grown up in a slum in some poor village in India, who's always lived in totally dirty surroundings with rats and cockroaches and mosquitoes and all types of filth with no proper drainage or sewage in their place where they live. And they're used to living in those dirty conditions. They're used to filth.

And it's not difficult for them to live in that filth because they're used to it from childhood. But think of someone who's coming from very, very hygienic surroundings, who's been brought up in luxury and very, very hygienic surroundings, let's just say from some Western country, who's, I mean, some of those people have never seen a lizard crawling in their house ever in their life, never seen a cockroach in their house, etc. In such a standard of hygiene, coming and living in this slum in order to help the people in that slum to live a better life.

Who do you think would find a greater struggle there to live in that slum? Is it this person who's come from totally pure surroundings, hygienic surroundings, or the person who's always lived there? You know the answer. The person who's come from totally hygienic surroundings will find it such a struggle just to live there and leave alone keep himself pure from unhygienic situations. So even so, Christ came from the purity of heaven to this earth.

It must have been very, very difficult for him, much more than for us who are used to this filth. So it was a greater battle for him. And further, he could not afford to sin even once if he was going to be a sacrifice for us.

And we know how difficult it is to keep from sinning in our thoughts or attitudes or motives, just for one day. I mean, if you manage to live free from sin in thought, word, attitude, motive for one month, boy, that would be a feat. Jesus taught us to pray every day, forgive us our sins as we forgive others.

Do you know that that's a prayer that even if you don't repeat it, we need to recognize that we need to pray for it every day? I pray every day, Lord, forgive me my sins. How do we know this is a supposing something we need daily? Because the previous request is, give us this day our daily bread. Matthew 6, verse 11.

So it's a daily thing. Lord, I need my daily bread today. And the next request is, forgive me my sins every day.

Then you may say, what are you talking about victory over sin then, if you're sinning every day? Ah, there is a difference between overcoming conscious sin and unconsciously sinning in areas that we don't even know about. The area of our life that we know is only about 10%, like the tip of the iceberg, like a cube of ice in a glass of water, just the top part, that's all we can see of sin in our life. The whole lot of areas in our life where we're unconscious of sin, of unchristlikeness, and we need to pray that God will forgive us, even those areas.

So that's what I mean, we can live in total victory over conscious sin. Like the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, he says in verse 4, I am conscious of nothing against myself. Or in other words, I'm living in victory over all known sin.

I'm not aware of any sin in my life that I'm conscious of, but that doesn't mean I'm acquitted. It doesn't mean I'm completely free from guilt, because 1 Corinthians 4.4, the one who examines me is not you folks, you Corinthians, who can only see my external life. The one who examines me is the Lord himself, to whom I'm answerable, and he sees a whole lot of areas in my life that I don't even see myself.

And so, I can't say I'm acquitted. I have to ask God to forgive me. And as God gives me light on those areas, I can seek to overcome in those areas.

This is sanctification. So when in the simple command, follow me, the Lord is showing us the pathway to a wonderful life of progressive sanctification, where, like it says in Proverbs 4, and verse 18, the path of the righteous person, who has been declared righteous by being, having the righteousness of Christ imputed to him the moment he's converted, now progresses in practical righteousness to a greater degree day by day, says in Proverbs 18, just like the sun, when it rises and slowly becomes, goes into the heavens, higher and higher and higher till it comes to the perfect noonday position when it's brightest. So sunrise is like being born again.

The darkness is passed away. From that moment, we shouldn't remain with the sun on the horizon in our lives. It must increase in brightness.

The path of the righteous is like the shining light, like the light of dawn that gets brighter, brighter, brighter, brighter, till the day Christ comes back when it says we will be like him, 1 John chapter 3, verse 2. We will be like him only when he comes. But we can walk like him today. Notice that difference in 1 John chapter 3, verse 2. Beloved, we are already children of God.

That's already taken place. But what we're going to be is not yet manifest. What are we going to be like? We're going to be like him.

We're going to be like Jesus completely in our total personality, thought, word, deed, attitude, motive, inner life, unconscious life. Every part of me is going to be like Jesus when? When he comes again and we see him as he is. But until that day, what should we do? It says in the next verse, if you have this hope that one day you'll be like him, you will keep on purifying yourself every day until you reach his standard of purity.

And that's what it says in 1 John 2, in verse 6, that if I say I'm a Christian, I must live like Christ lived, walk as he walked, then one day I will be like him. So see the difference between 1 John 2, 6 and 1 John 3, 2. If you want to understand the simple command of Jesus, follow me. 1 John 2, 6 is I to walk by the same principles by which Jesus lived his earthly life.

The same attitude to material things, the same attitude to men, the same attitude to women, the same attitude to Pharisees, the same attitude to religious hypocrites, the same attitude to enemies who crucified him, father forgive them for they don't know what they do, etc. The same attitude that Jesus had towards every human being and to material things, that is to walk as Jesus walked. And the Holy Spirit will enable us to do that.

But it will only be in our conscious area, which is 10% of our life. And the remaining 90%, as God reveals to us more and more of the hidden areas of our life, we overcome in those areas too. And we progressively purify ourselves.

God cleanses us from sin. That's 1 John 1, 7. He cleanses us from sin. But 1 John 3, 3 is we purifying ourselves as we seek to get rid of by the power of the Holy Spirit sinful habits in our life.

This is what it means to follow in Jesus' footsteps. And Jesus is called in Hebrews 6, 20, our forerunner. It's a title which many Christians don't know.

We know him as our savior. We know him as the light of the world, the bread of life, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth and the life, the good shepherd. But here's a title which is not so well known.

Hebrews 6, 20, our forerunner. That means one who has run this race in front of us. Hebrews is a great book that tells us about the humanity of Christ and how we can follow him.

And it says in Hebrews 12, verse 1 and 2, that we have to run this race looking at our forerunner, Christ, who was tempted like us, who lived on earth like us. And there's no excuse for us today to say, I can't overcome conscious sin. No excuse.

Except that we're not hungering and thirsting after righteousness. We're not seeking to be filled with the Spirit and live a Spirit-filled life every day. So all that is involved in this simple command, follow me.

Not just follow the written word. You know, we can become bibliolators. That means people who worship the Bible.

And then people can do so many theological arguments about what does this verse mean and what does that verse mean? See, what do you do when you come to an English word that you can't understand? Supposing you found a difficult English word in a book. Here's what I do. I put the book aside and take a dictionary.

I try to find out the meaning of that word. That's how I improve my English. That's how I've done it for the last so many years.

Whenever I've come across a word that I didn't know, I look up a dictionary. In the same way in the Bible, when you come across a verse that you cannot understand, look up the dictionary. The dictionary is not an earthly dictionary now.

The biblical dictionary is the word made flesh in Christ. He's our dictionary. So when you come across a verse in the New Testament that commands you to do something, you don't know what it means, look at Jesus Christ and see how he did it.

That's our dictionary. The way he did it is the way for me to follow. If you want to understand humility, don't look up an English dictionary.

Look at Jesus Christ. If you want to know what it is to love God, look at Christ. If you want to know what it is to love people, look at Christ.

If you want to know how to treat women, look at Christ. If you want to know what your attitude to money should be, look at Christ. So this is all that's involved in this simple command, follow me.

We're not following commands in the Old Testament. They could only follow commands, many commandments, 613 commandments in the law of Moses. Boy, what a job even to remember them, to follow them.

But now it's all simplified by the Holy Spirit who shows us Jesus Christ all the time in our life and we can follow his example. That's why the Christian life has become simple in the New Covenant. You don't have to remember so many commandments, follow me.

So let's allow the Holy Spirit to show us the glory of Jesus so that we can follow him more closely. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you again, we thank you for your word that is so clear for all who have ears to hear.

Help us to follow in Christ's footsteps every single step of the way. We humbly ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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