

Balanced Christianity 4. Loving Jesus and Being Broken

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a balanced Christian life, loving Jesus, and being broken, with a focus on Romans 8:28 and the concept of predestination.

Duration: 1:08:34

Scripture: Romans 8:28

Topics: "Brokenness And Surrender", "Dependence On God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the journey of brokenness and surrender to God's will in order to experience His power and fulfill His purpose in our lives. Through examples like Abraham, Moses, and Peter, it illustrates the process of going from difficulty to impossibility to God's miraculous intervention. The importance of recognizing our weaknesses, allowing God to break us, and leading us to a place of complete dependence on Him is highlighted as the key to a balanced Christian life.

Transcript

So, in continuing thinking about the beauty of a balanced Christian life, I remember yesterday we started with this verse, let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, from Psalm 90. In that prayer that we pray, let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, all His wondrous compassion and purity. And the Holy Spirit has come primarily to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

One of the things that I've been stressing very much in these days, in all our churches I have responsibility for, is to have a clear sense of direction, where exactly are we heading. We never do anything without a goal. When you send your children to school, you have a goal.

When you get into the car and start driving, you have a goal. When you get in to buy a ticket to take a flight, you have a goal. You've always got, in everything in life you have a goal.

Even if you start a business, you have a goal. And what would you say is the goal of your Christian life? For many people it is somehow to endure on this earth and go to heaven when we die, or maybe to be of some help to others. But if we have a goal which is not the goal God has for us, we're going to have problems along the way.

And we'll have so many questions. A lot of people have questions when God doesn't seem to answer their prayers. So I want to turn you to one of the most familiar verses in the Bible, Romans 8, 28.

Many people know this verse, many Christians, that God makes all things work together for good to those who love Him. Not for everybody. Those who love Him and were called according to His purpose.

So, if you can say that, to the best of your knowledge, you love Jesus more than anything and anyone on earth and you have nothing that means more to you than Jesus and wanting to please Him. And you want to fulfil His purpose for your life more than anything else. You can be certain of one thing, that every single thing that happens in your life will work for your good.

I have lived by that verse for many years, it's in the last 57 years. I can give you my testimony that every single thing that's happened to me has worked for my good. Every thing that other people have done, people have tried to harm me.

You know when you serve the Lord, a lot of people, you're going to be the enemy of the devil and people are going to try to harm you. No, it's worked for my good. Everything, there's never a man or a human being who's been able to harm me till today.

They've tried to, they didn't succeed because by the time it reached me, it went through God's filter of Romans 8.28 and it turned out for my good. The greatest proof of that is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The greatest evil that ever took place on this earth was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

You cannot think of a greater sin or a greater evil that anybody ever did than killing the son of God on the cross. And then if I were to ask you what is the best thing that ever happened on this earth, it was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Can you think of anything better than that that happened on this earth? Where would we be if Christ had not died? So what is God trying to teach us? Many people look at the cross and learn one lesson, Christ died for my sins, but there's a lot more than that, a lot more.

Here's another lesson, my old man was crucified with him so that I never become a slave to sin anymore. That's on the cross. Paul experienced it, he said, I'm crucified with Christ and I live, no longer I but Christ lives in me.

Another thing, the devil was defeated on the cross. That also took place on the cross. And here's another thing that God shows us on the cross that the greatest evil that anybody can do to you, I can turn into the greatest good.

That's a lesson we learn from the cross. Now, the way to find out whether you believe it or not is, now listen carefully. Do you ever complain against somebody that he did something to harm you? Then you don't believe it.

Do you murmur about your circumstances? Then you don't believe it. You see we can say I believe in Romans 8.28 but in actual life we don't. If you really believe in Romans 8.28, of course you can believe it only if you love God and your aim is to fulfill His purpose in your life and not your own private ambitions, then of course it doesn't apply to you.

But if your one aim in life is to fulfill God's plan for your life, you have no other ambition. That's the best life you can ever live and if that's your goal then you can be absolutely certain that every single thing that people do or don't do, somebody promises to do something for you and does not do it, even that will work

for your good and there are many examples in scripture of that. I'll give you just one.

I don't know whether you know the story of Joseph. I just want to show you one incident in Joseph's life or maybe two. In Genesis and chapter 37, we read that Joseph's brothers were very jealous of him and wanted to get rid of him and they wanted to kill him and just at that moment when they planned to kill him, one of the brothers said, let's not kill him, let's just throw him here and at that very moment we read in Genesis 37 and verse 28, some Midianite traders happened to pass by on their camels over there and so the idea came to these brothers, let's not kill Joseph, let's sell him to this Midianite traders and he'll take them out of this country.

But that was an evil desire. First of all, to kill him was an evil desire and they said, let's get rid of him but little did they realize they were fulfilling God's plan because these Midianite traders were going to Egypt and that's where God wanted to take Joseph. Now, to me the wonderful thing is how God timed the movement of these camels who walk very slowly to land at that spot at the exact time, the exact time when the brothers of Joseph were planning to get rid of him.

You see, it's not coincidence, a lot of things that happen in the life of a godly man are not coincidence. There's a timing of God where at this particular time, God does that other thing and camels can walk whatever speed they like but God times it such they land at that exact spot at the right time. That's the first thing I want you to see and then God takes him to Egypt and there a woman accuses him falsely of committing adultery which he never did and gets him put in prison but in prison, he gets a contact with Pharaoh's cupbearer and gets an introduction to Pharaoh.

That's where God wants to take him. He would never have met Pharaoh's cupbearer if he had not been falsely accused and imprisoned. Do you believe that when somebody falsely accuses you and imprisons you? That can work for your good? Okay, the next thing, he explained a dream to Pharaoh's cupbearer and it happened.

Three days later, Pharaoh's cupbearer was restored to the palace and Joseph said to him, please remember me when you go before Pharaoh. Will you please tell him? You read that in Genesis chapter 40 and verse 19, he said Pharaoh will, I'm sorry, in verse 21, he restored the chief cupbearer to the office and Joseph had said, please tell Pharaoh that I'm a young man here, I've been falsely accused, will you please release me and send me back to my parents in Canaan? And it says here in verse 23, yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph. I mean, Joseph had just told him that the previous day and the next day he was there in Pharaoh's and he completely forgot this tremendous explanation of his dream that this young man had given and he completely forgot.

Two years later, chapter 41 verse 1, when Pharaoh has a dream, that's the time the cupbearer says in verse 9, oh Pharaoh, I remember now, I completely forgot for two years, there was a man in prison who explained a dream to me and he could probably explain your dream to you. At that time, Joseph was 30 years old. Two years earlier, like it says in verse, the previous chapter, Joseph was 28.

And can you, I mean, you're all intelligent people, supposing the cupbearer had remembered and the very next day told Pharaoh as a young man there, Pharaoh would have released Joseph and where would he have gone? Back to Canaan. That was not God's will. But because God made Pharaoh's cupbearer forget, do you know that God can make you remember things and He can make you forget things? I'm very thankful that He reminds me of certain things and I'm also very thankful that sometimes He makes me forget something.

Here it was definitely God who made Pharaoh's cupbearer forget what Joseph asked him the previous day. Because God said, I don't want him to go back to Canaan, if Pharaoh releases him now, he'll go to Canaan. He's not yet ready.

By the time he's 30 years old, he'll be fully equipped spiritually to be the ruler in Egypt. And so God gives a dream to Pharaoh and then He makes the cupbearer remember. And then Joseph comes and that's the right time and Joseph is promoted to be the second ruler in Egypt.

These are amazing things. You got to see these things in the Old Testament. God's timing.

So what I'm trying to tell you is, everything will work together for your good. Even when people forget to do something they promised to do, give thanks. If you're a man or woman of faith, you will give thanks.

When people do evil to you, like the crucifixion of Christ, give thanks. It'll work out to be the very best. So Romans 8, 28 is a wonderful promise and it's a great thing if 50 years from now you can give a testimony like me, that for 50 years nobody's ever been able to harm me.

Everything has worked for my good. The good that people did, the evil that people did, didn't make a difference. It's like these water filters where you put in dirty water and clean water comes out.

Romans 8, 28 is like that. Everything works for good. But the next question is, for us, for people in the Old Testament, the good was health and wealth.

But for us the good is not health and wealth. It's not that the good that God's working for us is going to make us richer or more comfortable earthly. That's a very human way of looking at it.

God has got a much higher good for all of us and we need to understand what that good is. And that's why you must never read Romans 8, 28 without verse 29. The next verse.

Romans 8, 28 is very well-known, Romans 8, 29 is not so well-known. But you don't understand what the good is unless you read verse 29. Verse 29 says that those whom God foreknew, He knew us before the worlds were created and He predestined us.

Now that's a very big word. It's led to a lot of argument among Christians as to what is predestination. Does God predestine people to hell or to heaven? Never.

He never predestines anybody to go to heaven or to hell. He doesn't just pick out names and say, okay, this guy's going to go to heaven. Now some people think like that.

It's not true. God chooses us according to foreknowledge. So let me explain that first.

Predestination, it is in the Bible. But God's election of us is according to His foreknowledge. One Peter 1, you know there's a great argument among two groups of theologians in Christian called Calvinists and Armenians.

Calvinists emphasize the free, the choice, sovereign choice of God and the Armenians emphasize the free will of man. But in all the arguments of the Calvinists, I've never heard one Calvinist till today explain one Peter chapter 1 verse 1 and 2. That's the worst they avoid because it destroys their theology. It says God chose us according to His foreknowledge.

It wasn't arbitrary choice. Okay, so and so goes to heaven, so and so goes to hell. God would have to be very evil to send a man to hell for no reason at all and then it's completely unjust.

Man say, I hadn't, it didn't have a choice. You just predestined me to go to hell. It's ridiculous.

He doesn't do that. God chooses us according to foreknowledge. That means He knows in advance like we can see a video of something that happened yesterday or last year.

God can see a video of what's going to happen a thousand years from now. If you can look at it like that, that's foreknowledge. What's going to happen a thousand years from all eternity, everything that every human being ever did before Adam was created, God could see a video of the whole thing and He could see you accepting Christ, surrendering your life to Him.

When did He know that? Before Genesis 1 verse 1 because He could see the video of you in some place responding to Christ's call and so He chose you and put your name in the book of life. It's because of His foreknowledge. It says in verse chapter 1 verse 1 and 2, it's very clear.

So did God elect me? Yes, He certainly did. But He elected me according to His foreknowledge. He knew that for some particular time I would surrender my life to Him.

Same with you. But the predestination spoken of in Romans 8 29 is something more than that. Those whom He foreknew and if He knew ahead of time as He looked at that future video that you would respond to Christ and give your life to Him, then He chose you to be, He foreknew you.

He predestined you for what? He predestined you not to go to heaven or hell but to become like Jesus Christ. So predestination has got nothing to do with heaven or hell. It has got to do with becoming like Jesus Christ.

I hope that excites you more than being predestined to go to heaven. To tell you honestly, once I understood that in the early part of my Christian life, I believed what all Christians believe. I'm looking forward to going to heaven.

To tell you absolutely honestly, I am not looking forward to going to heaven. I'm looking forward to going to be with Jesus and to be like Him. And I don't care where it is.

I once told the Lord, I'd be happy to be in hell if you're there. Because hell will become heaven for me. I have already begun to experience heaven through the presence of Jesus Christ now.

It's only a foretaste. So dear brothers and sisters, let me change your focus. You know a lot of people say, I'm sick and tired of living on this earth.

I'm waiting to go to heaven. There are people who sing, I'm satisfied with a little cottage below, but there's a mansion waiting up for me in the hilltop. A mansion waiting for me in heaven.

I'll tell you honestly, I'm not looking for any mansion in heaven. I'm not looking for any crown. What will I do with five or ten crowns on my head? Is that what you're looking forward to? Are you looking for a fourteen bedroom mansion in heaven? I say you can have it.

I don't want it. I want to be with Jesus all the time. I don't want to be in any mansion.

And if I have any crown, I'll throw it at the feet of Jesus. So, all these things are pictures the Lord uses, because mansions and crowns are very valuable on earth. God uses those pictures to give us a picture of a reward that God will give to people who are faithful on this earth.

And you know, on earth, a reward may be a mansion or a crown. And that's because these things are valuable. Houses are valuable on earth.

Crowns, golden crowns are very valuable. So, if that is a picture of something that's valuable in heaven, I ask myself this question, what is the thing which I will value most when I get to heaven? Can you answer that question? Have you ever thought of it? What would you value most in heaven? Would it be a mansion? A house? Or the golden street in front of your house? Or a crown on your head? Nothing. These things are all material and have no value for me in heaven.

As I've seen it, the only thing that will have value for me in heaven is closeness to Jesus Christ. Closeness of fellowship with Christ and with my Father. And if that is the reward for faithfulness on earth, I just got to face it.

The Bible says that everybody will be rewarded according to his works. So, which means not every believer is going to get the same reward. Very clear.

When we stand at the judgment seat of Christ and the millions and millions of believers, they are going to be rewarded according to their faithfulness on earth. Otherwise, God would be unjust. Otherwise, he'd be telling a lie when he's promised rewards on earth.

We don't work for reward. Definitely not. If you work for reward, you won't get it.

That's another thing. If any of you are working in order to get a reward, I want to tell you the truth, you'll probably be lost in the lie. We don't work for reward, but God will give a reward.

And if that reward is closeness to Jesus, all believers are not going to get an equal reward because we know very well that all believers are not equally faithful. Do you think every believer is equally faithful with money? You know it's not true. Do you think every believer is equally faithful with his time? Or in battling sin and seeking to be pure in his life, you think every believer is equally faithful? No.

Many believers are more faithful than others. Do you think every believer is faithful in serving God and serving God's people? There are some who have sacrificed more. And if God were to just equalize everybody in heaven, it would be like a teacher giving marks in an examination.

And here's a student who studied really hard and got every problem right and deserves a hundred percent. And here's another lazy student who just took it easy and got half the problems wrong. And the teacher says, well I'm very gracious, I'll give a hundred percent to all of you.

Do you think that is righteous? No. God is not unrighteous. I want to tell you very frankly, honestly, scripture teaches very clearly, even in the last page of scripture, I want you to turn to this verse in Revelation 22.

It's the last page of scripture. The last page of scripture. One of the last promises in the Bible.

If not the last. What is it? Revelation 22, verse 12. Here is a promise.

I am coming quickly. The word quickly actually means suddenly. I'm coming suddenly.

Translated like that. And my reward is with me. To give to every person according to what he has done.

Salvation is not according to our works. Forgiveness of sins. We saw that yesterday.

In the foundation, there are no doors and windows. In the superstructure or skyscraper, hundreds of doors and windows. So in the foundation of our Christian life, no works, you cannot be saved by works.

Your forgiveness of sins is absolutely free. It's a free gift. You come with empty hands and say, Thank you Lord for dying for me.

You've forgiven me. But the rest of your life, it says God has preordained works that we should walk in. And some have sacrificed and denied themselves to walk in those works that God prepared for them.

And others have just said, Well, I'm going to heaven so I can just take it easy. The reward is going to be different. It's very clear here according to what he has done.

I'll show you another verse. 2nd Corinthians 5. 2nd Corinthians 5. Verse 10. He's talking about believers.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That everyone will be rewarded for his deeds which he did in the body according to what he has done, good or bad. Now that's not talking about salvation, forgiveness of sins or heaven or hell.

Because we're not going to heaven on the basis of our good works. So when it says good or bad, it's not this heathen idea that God's got a weighing balance and he puts all your good deeds on one side and your bad deeds on the other side and then decides whether you go to heaven or hell. That's not Christianity.

That's false religion. Christianity says we go to Christ when you come with empty hands and go to heaven. When you come with empty hands and say I have nothing to commend myself.

Jesus died for me. I've turned from my sins and I receive them. That's the only basis we go into God's kingdom.

But the good or bad is for reward for believers. And you may say, what does it matter if I don't get a reward so long as I'm in heaven? Well I want to use an illustration from the earth which will show you how you'll be like in heaven. Think of a homeless person here on this earth.

Think of a homeless person, really homeless person with nobody to help him. Shivering on the streets in the cold. Getting wet in the rain.

Hunting for food in the garbage bins. That's how it is in India. Hunting for food in the garbage bins.

Struggling to survive day after day. Every day is a pain. Living year after year after year.

Imagine a homeless man who lives like that for a hundred years. And compare him with a rich king in a palace who's living on the same earth. Comfortably enjoying himself.

That's going to be a picture. Both are on the earth, right? Nobody's in hell. Both are on the earth.

But one's a homeless man and one's a king. Is there a difference between them? That's a picture of how it will be in heaven. Well, they're both in heaven, sure.

But there will be a difference. And I don't think we realize it fully right now. If we did, we would be radical and wholehearted in our Christian life.

Because our entire life on earth, even if you live a hundred years, is going to be like one day compared to eternity. Millions and millions of years. Are you going to think of that? Is it important? And if the reward in heaven is closeness to Jesus, and to think that some believers are going to be close to Jesus and some are not going to be so close to Him for all eternity.

Wow! And that depends on how I live on this earth. Lord, I want to take it seriously. You say, why didn't anybody tell me this earlier? Well, you had a Bible.

Like Abraham said, they've got a Bible. They could have read it. I didn't discover this by some revelation from heaven.

No angel came and told me this. It's written in the same Bible that you have. I just read it a little more carefully, that's all.

Because I see that my eternal destiny depends on what's written in this book. Now, you may not believe it, but I believe it with all my heart. You say you believe it, but I don't know whether you do.

Do you really believe that we'll stand at the judgment seat and be rewarded exactly according to what we have done in our body? How much have you battled sin? How much have you fought against sin in secret? We're talking about a balanced Christian life. Foundation and superstructure. Okay, we are clear as far as justification, declared righteous, accepted by God, that's fine.

What about the other side? Turn with me to Ephesians in chapter 2. Once again, we looked at that verse yesterday. Ephesians 2 in verse 8, By grace you're saved through faith. It's talking about initial step of forgiveness, salvation from the penalty of sin.

Not of yourselves. It's a gift of God. Not as a result of works.

That's one side of truth. No works in forgiveness of sins. In salvation from the penalty of sin.

But now, we come to the superstructure. You remember that passage where Jesus said about some people, Luke 14, some people who laid a foundation and everybody laughed at them and said, what did you just build a foundation for? If you're not planning to build a house. Would you ever go and build a foundation somewhere and forget about it for 50 years? They'd ask you, why in the world did you build a foundation? Why did you waste all that money on a foundation if you were not planning to build a house? Nobody lays a foundation.

Only a foolish person lays a foundation and doesn't build a house. But you know there are lots of Christians like that. They've laid a good foundation.

I'm saved by the death of Christ and not by any good works of mine. Wonderful. The perfect foundation.

What have you built on it? Have you lived for yourself? Played the fool with sin? And not sought to find out what's God's will for your life? Then you haven't built anything. So, the superstructure is in verse 10. We

are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus or made anew in Christ Jesus or born again we can say.

For what purpose? For good works. Plenty of good works. Which, not any type of good works.

You know, some people say, I'm going to do some good for God. You know, like people say, what are you just sitting around doing nothing? Go and do something for God, man. Do you think the angels tell each other that? What are you sitting around, Gabriel, doing nothing? Go and run around, do something for the Lord.

And Gabriel doesn't get all worked up to do something for God. No. You know how the angels do? You know, we are taught to pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The angels wait on God. God, what do you want me to do? Every day, God may say, go down to Nazareth and tell that young woman that she's going to give birth to Jesus. Or go to that temple and tell Zacharias that he's going to have a son.

They are sent. And then they go, do that. They come back and say, we've done it, Lord.

What next? Thy will be done on earth in my life as it is done in heaven. In other words, it's not any bright idea that I have. Angels don't get bright ideas.

In heaven, they don't do their own will, even if it is good. There's a proverb that even is used in the world saying the good is the enemy of the best. And what you choose may be good, but that may not be God's will for your life which is the best.

So, it's works which God, see Ephesians 2.10, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. In other words, God's already made a plan. That's what you're supposed to fulfill.

And it's a wonderful thing if you can be gripped by that when you're young. I was gripped with it when I was 21 years old, more than 50 years ago, 55 years ago. I was baptized and I realized God has got a plan for my life.

Now, my plan was very different. I had already made a plan for my life. I was in the Indian Navy and I wanted to go up to the top.

Then I realized that God's got a plan for my life and that may not be exactly according to my plan. And I said, Lord, when I come to the end of my life, I don't want to look back over my life and say I accomplished something on this earth. I became famous or I did something.

You know, that's what a lot of people live for. They made a lot of money or made a name for themselves. I want to come to the end of my life and say what Jesus said.

I have finished the work, Father, you gave me to do. What Paul said, I fought a good fight and I finished my course. I want to say to all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, I wish you'd be gripped by this.

And don't worry if you're not young, even if it's you're older, at least from now. Can you say, Lord, of the years that are left to me, I give them to your hand. Take me, break me, mold me into the pattern you have planned.

I remember as a young man, way back when I was 21, reading a poem which said, when I stand at the judgment seat of Christ and he shows me his plan for me, the plan for my life as it might have been had he had his way with me. And I see how I blocked him here and I checked him there and I would not yield my will. You know, as I see the video of my past life, the plan he had for me which he shows me in the background and the way I lived because I checked him here and I blocked him there and I sought something else and I would not yield my will.

Will there be grief in my savior's eyes? Grief, though he loves me still. And I look with regret over my past life and I don't have a chance to live it again. And the last verse of that poem says, Lord of the years that are left to me, I give them to thy hand.

Take me, break me, mold me to the pattern that you have planned. We can't do anything about the years gone by but we can do a lot about today and tomorrow. Repentance means a regret over the way I have lived outside the will of God.

So, if there's a good verse that God has planned beforehand, we don't have to sort of get into a frantic, you know, worry about this. God guides in sometimes in a very unconscious way and he overrules. We don't have to consciously say, Lord, what do I have to do now? What shirt shall I wear today? Is it this one or that one? You know, that's crazy.

If generally speaking, your life is submitted, say, Lord, I don't want my will in my life. If you have said that to the Lord, I want your will. Consciously and unconsciously, I want you to guide me in my will.

You know, Joseph was not consciously seeking God's will. But God made it work for him because he saw the young boy's heart was sincere. It wasn't Joseph who planned for the Midianite traders to land up there at the right time.

It wasn't Joseph who planned for Potiphar's wife to accuse him and put him in prison. It was God who planned it. So, if God sees that you are a sincere person who is really wanting to do His will, He will work everything out.

The responsibility is His, not ours. I praise God for that. So, I don't have to consciously live in attention saying, what do I do next? If basically, my desire is not to do my own will but the will of God in my life.

I want and I'm willing to sacrifice anything to do His will. I can tell you that God will fulfill His plan for your life. Turn with me to Psalm 139.

Psalm 139. It says here in Psalm 139 that talking about the time when I was in my mother's womb, you were in your mother's womb. While I was in my mother's womb, verse 13, you formed my inward parts and wove me in my mother's womb.

And there, in verse 16, your eyes saw my unformed substance. You know it's a wonderful thing when we look at our children, the children God gives us and see that when they were in their mother's womb, God saw their unformed substance. And in God's book were written all the days that were planned for you.

And for me. When was that? When I was in my mother's womb, God had a, when you say a book, what it means is in God's mind. God doesn't have physical books like this.

In God's mind, one part of God's mind was Zakfunin. And he had a plan for me. He knew that I would wander around here and there and not seek him.

But at the age of 19, I would give my life to him. At the age of 21, I'd get baptized. And at the age of 26, I'd leave my job.

And he also knew that after that, I'd still not be 100% faithful. I'd still backslide a bit here and there. But then he knew that at one point in my life, I'd begin to take my life seriously.

Really seriously, to fulfill God's will for my life. I was around 35 when that happened. And God said, okay, now I've got a plan for his life.

So, it doesn't matter if you, you know, we all wander around and backslide and do a lot of foolish things in the early years of our life. You can still fulfill God's plan for your life. Think of the Apostle Paul.

He says, when Apostle Paul was in his mother's womb, think of this, Paul was in his mother's womb and God had a plan for him. The number of days that were, what he is to fulfill. And certainly it was not God's will in that plan that Paul should, when he's 25 years old, be a zealous persecutor of Christians.

He should go around locking them up in jail. No, he did that. That was foolish.

How does that work out with God's plan? God knows that this guy is going to do a lot of stupid things. Like all of us. I did a lot of stupid things.

And many of you, if you look back in your life, you're honest, you've acknowledged, you've done a lot of foolish things. You don't have to live in lifelong regret over that. God's made allowance for it.

That's the good news. That God knew that this Paul would finally come to his senses when he's around 30 years old. Because he's basically sincere.

But he hasn't understood the truth. And from the age of 30 onwards, he'd take life seriously. At 30 or whatever age he was when he got converted.

I'm sure it wasn't earlier than 30. And then he lives up to the age of 67. When he was beheaded.

So, out of 67 years, 30 years he didn't really fulfill God's will for his life at all. He messed it up. But yet, Paul says at the end of his life, in 2nd Timothy 4, I have finished my course.

How is that? That doesn't work out exactly according to our mathematical type of mind that we have. That if a man's messed up the first 30 years of his life, how in the world can he fulfill God's plan? See, this is the wonderful thing about God. God's ways are not our ways.

He knows that we are a bunch of stupid people who do a lot of foolish things. And even after we hear the gospel, we do a lot of foolish things. And he makes allowance for it.

Isn't he a wonderful father? I praise God that my dad is such a wonderful person who makes allowance for the foolishness in our life. He says, okay, he'll get serious one day and from then on I'm going to fulfill a plan through his life. And I want to say that that's God's will for all of you.

God's got a plan for your life. It's written down. And in his book, he's allowed for those years of foolishness in Paul's life, in your life, my life.

He even allowed for... I mean, he didn't plan for Peter to deny Jesus three times. Definitely not. God doesn't plan sin.

But he allows for it. Yeah, this guy is going to go and deny Jesus three times in one night. Okay.

Allowed for it. And he'll make it work for good. Do you know that God made that evil thing that Peter did work for good? I don't know whether you know the story.

I don't have time to point out those verses. But if you read those chapters in the four Gospels, it says Peter came to the door, to the gate of the high priest's compound house and the sentry wouldn't let him in. Who's this guy? This fisherman.

You got no right to get in here. Because Jesus was being tried inside there. John, the apostle who knew the high priest, came to the gate and said, let Peter in.

Do you know that if that had not happened, Peter would never have denied Jesus three times? He wouldn't have been able to get into that compound of the high priest. It's because John let him in that he denied Jesus. So, you would think, boy, it would have been good if John had not let him in.

Why did God allow John to know that Peter is waiting at the gate and come there and get, tell the sentry to let him in? Does God allow things that make us fall into sin? When somebody is going, driving somewhere to commit adultery, why doesn't God give him a flat tire? You know, you have questions like this. I mean, God knew I was going to do this. Why didn't He allow something to happen that would hinder me to go there? I'll tell you why God allowed John to open, get the gate open for Peter to come in, so that Peter would deny Jesus.

Earlier on, when Jesus said to Peter, you're going to deny me three times tonight. And you're going to hit rock bottom. But I'm not going to pray that you will not deny me.

Isn't that amazing? If you knew that somebody was going to commit a sin, wouldn't you pray that he wouldn't do it? I mean, I would pray. Lord, that guy is going to commit adultery. Stop him.

Give him a flat tire or something. Lord, he's going to deny you. Don't let the sentry let him into that compound.

He didn't pray like that. What Jesus did pray was, Luke 22. He told him in verse 34, you're going to deny me three times, but I'm not going to pray that you won't deny me.

God's ways are not our ways. I'll tell you. God doesn't make us sin, but He allows us to fall many times.

Some of you who have a problem with anger. God allows you to fall. He's hoping that one day, you'd realize how much you have dishonored God by your anger or some other bad habit.

That'll be the day when your life will be turned around. When you realize, Lord, I just can't make it. I'm a slave to this.

No matter how many good resolutions I make, I just fall. I'm sure after the first time Peter denied Jesus, he just said, okay, I'll make a good resolution. I'll never deny him again.

And a few minutes later, he's denied him again. Okay, I've done it twice, Lord. Never again.

And a few minutes later, a third time. That's how we are. God allows it.

But the Lord said to Peter, I prayed for you something else. Luke 22, 32. I prayed that your faith will not fail.

That means when you hit rock bottom and you've denied me three times and you can't go any lower, that there, when you hit rock bottom, you'll believe that God still loves you and wants you to come back. Like the prodigal son, when you hit the level of the pigs, remember that your dad still loves you and is waiting for you to come back. Don't stay there.

Come back. I'm praying that your faith will not fail. That's the meaning.

Faith will not fail means I still believe God loves me despite the fact that I've failed so many times. I've fallen into this particular sin so many times. I can't think I can go lower.

Remember at that point, God still loves you. If you stop believing that, your faith has failed. And Peter believed that.

And that's why it says, he went out and wept bitterly. Luke 22, 62. He went out and wept bitterly.

And he was never the same after that. There's something that God has to do in order to bring us to this balanced Christian life where we don't take advantage of God's grace. But we use God's grace as power to live a godly life.

And that is a thing called brokenness. It's something that's taught throughout scripture. The great work God has to do in us before he can use us or fulfill his will through us is brokenness.

You see that in the life of Moses. At the age of 40, he was a mighty accomplished man. Stephen says in Acts 7, And he was eloquent.

Eloquent. He had been trained in the best academies in Egypt. He knew how to build pyramids and all types of things.

He was a muscular man. One hit and he killed an Egyptian. Can you believe that? He was a very strong man.

With one blow, he killed a man. And he was eloquent. And he thought, you read that very clearly and I don't have time to show you in Acts chapter 7. He thought that the Israelites would recognize God's called me to deliver you.

Can you imagine how long it would have taken if he started killing the Egyptians one by one with blows in his hand to deliver the Israelites? He'd never have finished. God said, I've got a better way, Moses. I'm going to take off all your strength.

First. And he took him out of the academies of Egypt to the academy of the wilderness. And kept him with looking after sheep.

The mighty prince of Egypt. And if that itself was not humiliating enough, he made him live with his father-in-law. Not for one year.

Forty years. Have any of you had to live in your father-in-law's house? Your wife's father's house. Employed by your wife's father.

For forty years. And you have to live with him. Employed by him.

He pays your salary. He runs your life. And you were once a prince.

Boy. God's ways are so wonderful. To humble us and break us and bring us down to zero.

And when he succeeded in bringing this mighty prince of Egypt down to zero, it took him forty years. God says, Moses, now you're ready. But Moses says, no Lord, I'm not.

I'm just a hopeless failure. I can't even speak. Can you imagine this eloquent man now saying I can't speak.

What a work God has done in him. I tell you it's a really mighty work that God does in a man. When the man who's such an eloquent speaker comes before God and says, Lord, I can't speak.

I can speak in the way the Egyptians taught me but I can't speak as your servant. Many preachers have not learnt that lesson. That's why the anointing is not upon their life.

They depend so much on their ability and qualification and eloquence. I was not an eloquent person. I never was.

I was very shy. Even when I was in the military. I was a very shy reserved person.

I never spoke in public. I never took part in public speaking in school or any such thing in my whole life. I said, Lord, if you want me to speak for you you've got to fill me with the Holy Spirit and give me a supernatural ability which I don't have.

I'm scared of standing before people. I still am basically a very shy person. I don't like to stand before people but God tells me to do that, I do it.

We're not to serve God according with our natural ability. And that's what God wanted to remove from Moses. And when he was broken, do you know how many Egyptians he killed? The entire Egyptian army.

Without touching one of them, he just lifted up his rod and the whole army of Egyptians were buried under the Red Sea. God says, isn't my way better than yours? Where you are weak and I use your weakness to manifest my power. When he killed one Egyptian with a blow, he got the glory.

Look what Moses can do. When he buried the Egyptian army under the Red Sea, who got the glory? God. Everybody knew that was not Moses.

And when you do a work where you get the glory, you know that you've done it. If you take the glory, I mean people may foolishly honor you, that's another thing. But if you take that honor to yourself, that wasn't the work of God.

Oh, you're a thief. If it's really the work of God, you'll be the first person to recognize that you didn't do that. I've learned that through the years in preaching.

That, you know by the time I come to end of a sermon, I say, Lord, I didn't plan on saying all that. It was you. And even the many churches, you know, you don't know the different churches we have planted in many, many different parts of India.

I know exactly how every one of them was planted. Yeah. Maybe 70, 80 now in different parts of the world.

And, I know very clearly that I had nothing to do with any of them being planted. I just happened to be around. And the Lord did something and did an amazing work there and I just happened to go there and it's like I kept the basket under the tree and the fruit kept dropping into the basket.

What could I do? It's exactly like that. You won't believe, you think I'm just trying to be humble. It's not trying to be humble.

It's the honest truth. God does His work in such a way that no man can get any credit or glory for it. Whether it's preaching a sermon or planting a church or doing any work for Him.

That's why He needed Peter to be broken. Because Peter was that proud man who says, even if everybody denies you, I won't deny you. You think such a man can serve God? No.

You think a 40 year old Moses who says, I can kill a fellow with one blow and I'm eloquent. Do you think such a man can serve God? Never. That's the trouble today.

The Bible schools and colleges train people to be eloquent and to have such a lot of knowledge of Greek and Hebrew and all. They don't know God. How can they do His work and build a church? You don't need to know Hebrew and Greek and all that to serve God.

You need to know Him. That's the most important thing. And so, Peter had to be broken.

And that was his preparation to serve the Lord. So when Jesus looks at all His disciples after His resurrection and says, whom shall I select now to be the preacher on the day of Pentecost? To initiate this wonderful work. Whom would you select? Would you select someone who denied the Lord three days ago? Jesus would.

He said, I'm going to select Peter. That would have been a real surprise to some of the other apostles because they knew He denied Him. Lord, are you going to choose him? This guy who denied you, he's going to be your main speaker on the day of Pentecost? Yes.

Because when he brings 3,000 Jews to Christ with a 15-minute sermon, 3,000 Jews are not only born again but baptized and baptized in the Holy Spirit. He will never take the credit for himself. That's why he's ready.

Some of the others would take the credit for themselves. And if you went up to Peter on the day of Pentecost and slapped him on the back and said, Wow, Peter, what a ministry, man. You're a mighty man of God.

He said, no, no, no, no. He said, I'll tell you what I did 40 days ago. I denied Jesus.

I'm not strong. I'm a weak person. That wasn't me.

I don't know how these people got converted. He remembered it for the rest of his life. And I'll tell you it's a wonderful thing when God does something in you that breaks you so badly that you remember it for the rest of your life.

God's done that with me. And He's done things in my life breaking me that I'll never forget for the rest of my life. That I can never imagine whenever, you know, a lot of people give me credit for things which they think I did it, I don't do it.

I know it's God. But that's because He's done a work in breaking in me for many years. He allowed me to be misunderstood in churches.

In churches where I was speaking regularly for many weeks on end. The misunderstanding the elder brother made me shut up and sit at the back of the church for 3 years. And the Lord said to me, keep your mouth shut.

Don't leave this church. Don't speak against the elders. And if people ask you, why are they not letting you speak now? Brother Zach, don't say anything.

Don't justify yourself. And for years, I know God took me through a period of breaking for 3 or 4 years before we started our first church in my home. And I needed it.

Because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to handle what God was going to commit into my hands. And I want to say to you, if you resist the work of breaking that God wants to do in you, He will not be able to do what He wants to do through you. So these works that God has planned beforehand, one way He breaks us is through failure.

Peter failed. And you know that story of the disciples going fishing after the resurrection, after they saw Jesus in John 20. In John 21, they go fishing.

Maybe they went out at 6 o'clock in the evening. And Jesus doesn't come till 5 o'clock in the morning. 11 hours of fishing.

Jesus knew at 6 o'clock in the evening, previous evening, He said, they won't catch any fish. Why didn't He go to them at 6 and say, Hey, say, fellas, I will tell you right now, you're not going to catch any fish tonight. Let me help you to catch it.

No. Because they wouldn't have learnt their lesson. It had to go 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock, 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, midnight.

Still no fish. There are other fishermen around here who seem to be getting fish. Why are the fish all going there? We're not coming into our net.

That was God. Why are other people prospering? You're a child of God, you're not prospering. That fellow does a business and he prospers.

You're a child of God and you fail. Because you're a child of God. Because he's got something more than money for you.

Those other people are catching fish and I'm not. And Peter is wondering why. God is to break him some more.

He would have thought, well, I'm a failure as an apostle, but I can succeed as a fisherman. And God says, okay, go ahead and try. And he tries and tries and tries and tries and tries.

By 12 o'clock, it was getting really difficult. And by 5 o'clock in the morning, Peter said, impossible. The Lord says, now you're ready.

Cast your net on the other side. And he never caught so much fish in his entire life. There are three stages in God's working in our life.

Difficult, impossible, done. So, if it's not yet done in your life, if you've not yet come to the place where you've recognized it is impossible to live this Christian life, it's impossible to serve God as He wants us to. Maybe you're still in that difficult stage.

You need to be broken some more till you come to that place where you say, it is impossible for me to live according to the Sermon on the Mount. It's impossible for me to overcome this sin. Then you will find victory.

These are the three stages. Difficult, impossible, done. We read in Abraham's life that he went through those three stages.

God told him, you're going to have a son. And with that son, I'm going to bless nations through you. But his wife was barren.

And he himself was over 80 years old. So, he decided to help God. You know how people try to help God.

The Christian world is full of people who are always trying to help God. All these prayer letters that go forth asking for money. Brothers and sisters, God is in a tight spot.

Can you please help Him out? He's a bit hard up for money. It's absolutely shameful. God is hard up for money? And a poor beggar like you, even if you earn a million dollars a month, a year, you're going to help God? These are foolish preachers and pastors who present that image of God.

I've never done it in my life. I've served God for 50 years. I've never degraded God like that, saying God's hard up for money and He wants it from you.

He doesn't want a cent from you. He owns the silver and gold in the world. We disgrace so much, God so much, when we beg for money.

When we force people to type. That's why we've never done it. It's not just here, my brothers and sisters.

Let me tell you, I have conducted more than 100 or probably 200 conferences like this in many parts of the world. In not one of them, do we take an offering. And I've done it in the poorest villages in India.

We've never asked anybody for money. And we have 10, 20 conferences every year. And we've been going for 40 years.

In so many churches, we've never lacked, we've never taken an offering in any of our churches. 40 years, we've never taken an offering in any church. In any one of 80 to 100 churches, we've never taken an offering anywhere.

We've never asked people to pay their tithe. We've never asked people to give money. And there's always enough in the offering box.

I remember in the early days, we'd open the offering box, there'd be 2 rupees in it. That's about 3 cents. But that's all we needed then.

But when we needed much more, God gives us much more. God gives us according to our need. But we decide we're going to honour God.

We're not going to give the impression of God being a beggar, going around asking people. We believe in a God who's almighty ruler of heaven and earth. That if we seek His kingdom first, He will move people to give.

We didn't get money dropped in from heaven. God moved people here and there to give. But we never asked anybody.

We never will. So, I find that God has got it to break these apostles. You know, Peter had already been broken once.

Now you've got to be broken. You think you can fish. You fail, fail, fail.

Difficult, impossible, done. Like Abraham, he felt that, I've got to help God now. And so he says, well my wife can't get a son.

Let me marry, let me have sex with her maidservant. And Sarah also suggested that. And so they have a child.

And he lifts up Ishmael and says, let Ishmael live before you, he's a healthy guy. God says, no. That's your product, Abraham.

It's a product of your ability. And I cannot do my work with the work of man. It has to be my work.

I can use man, but it has to be my work. You know, it's a very simple principle that you have to understand. And so, it's a very interesting, I don't know whether you've seen this passage.

I'll just show it to you briefly in closing. It says in Genesis chapter, I don't know whether you notice these little things. Genesis 16.

Abraham, with the last verse, Genesis 16, 16. Abraham was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him. What's the next verse? Sometimes you've got to ignore the chapter divisions when you read the Bible.

Because the chapter divisions were made by man. The next verse is Abraham was 99 years old. What happened in those 13 years? Do you know what happened? God was waiting for Abraham to become impotent.

He was not impotent at 86. He could produce a child even though Sarah was barren. Abraham, you're not ready.

You wait 13 years till Abraham becomes impotent. And then, Isaac was not born as a virgin birth, no. But it was with God's supernatural ability.

Turn with me to Romans chapter 4. Romans 4. It says about Abraham, when God told him in verse 18, Your seed descendants will be like the stars in the sky. Romans 4, 19. Abraham, without becoming weak in faith, he looked at his own body, now as good as dead.

That's what tells me he was impotent. And Sarah's womb, dead. Then, he believed verse 20 in the promise of God and he got a child.

So what is it? At 86 it was difficult. By 99, it was impossible. By 100, it was done.

Isaac was born. This is God's way. That's the way He leads us to victory over sin.

You struggle, struggle, struggle under the law. It's difficult. One day you give up and say, Lord, it's impossible.

You got to fill me with the Holy Spirit. You got to fill me with the Holy Spirit everyday. To teach me to deny my will.

Otherwise, I want to Lord. But in the moment of temptation, I don't deny my will. I can't do it.

Break me. I tell you, He'll do it. Because He loves you.

He's got a plan for your life. He wants to lead you into a life of victory. And He wants to accomplish a purpose through you.

Fulfill a ministry through you. So that's the way God leads us into a balanced Christian life. It's not God's way of.

It's not man's way of becoming stronger and stronger. But rather becoming weaker and weaker and weaker. That's why I say in God's working us, He's always working to bring us down to a zero.

Toiling all night and catching nothing. God says, Now, I'll fill your boat with fish. I'll do such a miracle.

And you bring all that 153 fish to land. Peter couldn't boast in one of the previous times when Peter had fished. You know how fishermen like to boast about the fish they caught.

Well, fishermen, Peter could come and boast on previous occasions that all the fish he caught, but not that day. Those fantastic fish he had in his nets, he'd say, This is not me. When you come to that place in your life, when you can recognize that is not you, you can't do it.

You can't serve God. No matter how clever you are, how smart you are, how much you've studied the Bible, how capable you are. God had to bring me to that place.

And it took Him many years. He did that with Moses. He did that with Peter.

He wants to do it with everyone. If you don't allow Him to break you, He will not break you. If you resist, and you keep seeking your own honor, He'll leave you alone.

And you'll drift along as a useless believer, never accomplishing the works that God already planned for you. And you'll stand one day in eternity, regretting. Not that you were not clever or gifted or any such thing, but regretting that you did not allow God to humble you and break you through the circumstances of life.

So when He allows you to get sick or have financial difficulties or anything that God allows, remember, He's trying to break you. To bring you to the place where you feel, Lord, I just want to be a nobody. It's a wonderful place to be.

Because God can accomplish His purpose through your life. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray You'll help us to understand Your ways.

Your ways are so different from man's ways. We pray that You'll glorify Your name through each one of us here. I believe You love each one of us.

You've got a plan for each one of us. And we want it to be fulfilled. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Afj6sgh-1DI.mp4>

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