

(Basics) 22. One Reason for Failure

by Zac Poonen

The Christian life is a life of growth, where we overcome area after area in our life where we were once defeated, and we are to press on to perfection.

Duration: 13:05

Scripture: Psalm 103:3, Proverbs 4:12, Matthew 1:21, John 8:11

Topics: "Salvation And Forgiveness", "Victory Over Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses an illustration of a child falling into a pit to explain the concept of forgiveness and salvation. He emphasizes that forgiveness and salvation are two different things, and that through Jesus Christ, we can not only be forgiven for our sins but also be delivered from the power of sin. The speaker highlights the importance of the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom and suggests that a lack of fear of God may be a reason for repeated failures in life. He concludes by stating that the gospel message consists of both forgiveness and victory over sin, and that although we may still sin, we can have victory over sin through Christ.

Transcript

We're going to consider the reasons why we fall into sin and why we need not fall. I'm sure this is going to be a very relevant study for all of you who are listening. We considered in our last study that grace could keep us from being mastered by sin.

Man's greatest problem is that he's mastered by sin. And God has made a way through Jesus Christ, not only for the forgiveness of our sins, but for delivering us from sin's power. This is the good news of the gospel, really, that we can be delivered from the power of sin.

You know, there's a difference between being forgiven and being saved. Many people wouldn't be able to explain the difference between the two. Let me use an illustration to explain it.

If the people of the corporation are digging up the road in front of my house and they've made a deep pit there, and if I have a little child who's in my home and I tell him, well, son, don't go near that pit because you may fall and you may hurt yourself. Do you know how little children are? They don't pay attention to their parents and say he goes near the pit and he falls into it. And from within the pit he cries out and saying, daddy, daddy, help me.

And I hear that voice and I go running and I go there and say, son, what happened? And he says, daddy, I'm sorry, I disobeyed you and I've fallen here in this pit. And that pit's about, say, eight feet deep. And I say, well, that's okay, son.

I forgive you. Goodbye. And I leave him there and I go.

Have I forgiven him for his disobedience? I certainly have. Have I saved him? No, I haven't. Do you understand the difference now between being forgiven and being saved? David said, bless the Lord, O my soul who forgives all your iniquities.

But David could not be saved from the power of sin. It was the same with every person in the Old Testament. But when we turn to the pages of the New Testament, in the very first page, we come to this verse in Matthew 1, verse 21.

You shall call his name Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins. Not just forgive their sins. He will save his people, not in their sins, but from their sins.

If the gospel message is only that Jesus can forgive me, but cannot save me, I would say it's good news, but it's not as good news as it should be. It would be like telling the woman caught in adultery in John's Gospel, chapter 8. You remember what Jesus told her? Has no man condemned you? Jesus asked her and she said, no man, Lord. Well, Jesus said two things.

He said, I don't condemn you, John 8, 11. Now don't sin anymore. That's the twofold message of the gospel.

I do not condemn you. Go and don't sin again. Now, if there was only one part to it, I don't condemn you.

But, you know, you may go and you may fall into sin again. You may again live in adultery. That wouldn't be very much of a gospel.

But, these two parts. The gospel message has got two sides to the coin. And if one side is missing, it's an incomplete gospel.

People talk about the full gospel. Well, here it is. In John 8, 11.

I don't condemn you and don't sin again. Mercy and grace. Forgiveness and victory.

They only had forgiveness under the law. Now we have forgiveness and victory. There will not be any mastery over our life of sin anymore.

Now, if that be the case, does it mean that we will never sin again? No, it doesn't mean that. God says He's going to change our nature and give us the nature of God, of Himself. His own divine nature.

And when I have that nature, and I allow that nature to gradually control my life, I will become more and more free from sin. But I will not want to sin anymore. Now, you know the difference between a pig and a cat.

What's the difference? We can't say that a pig falls into dirty water and a cat will never fall into dirty water, because cats fall into dirty water too. But we can say, the difference can be observed when both these animals fall into the dirty water, that one relishes the experience, and the other jumps out immediately, and

not only jumps out immediately, but the cat licks itself and makes itself clean. Now this, we could say, illustrates the difference between an unconverted person and a person who is born again.

We cannot say that a born-again person will not sin. It's very evident that born-again people do, both in the Bible and in our experience. You do and I do.

But there is a difference. And the difference is a difference of nature. And you know whether you're born again at the moment when you fall into sin by your attitude towards that fall.

If it's one of remorse, and you want to get up, and you want to be clean, and you want to break away from it, well, that proves that God has done a work in your heart. But if you're happy that nobody saw it, and you enjoy yourself, and you don't want to give it up, well, that would prove that you're only religious. You haven't changed within.

Then why do Christians fall? Is it possible for us to overcome in such a way that we don't have to keep on falling into the same old sins again and again and again? The Christian life is a life of growth. It's not one where we keep on getting defeated, let's say, by anger for 25 years, or we keep on getting defeated by dirty thoughts for 25 years, or with jealousy, or bitterness, or anything. No.

There has to be progress. The Bible speaks of our growing in grace. And we could compare this with the growth of a child in a school.

You know, a child goes to school, and as year passes year, it goes from one standard to another standard. It learns things in one standard which it did not learn in the previous one. We can say it overcomes certain problems, let's say mathematical problems, in one year, that it could not overcome in the previous year.

Let's say a child does not know how to add. But then, after a year, it knows how to add, but it doesn't know how to subtract. And then after another year, perhaps it learns how to subtract, but it doesn't know how to multiply.

Then after another year, it learns how to multiply. And then it learns to divide, and then it learns how to get square roots. So, this is growth.

And here is an example of how it should be in our Christian life, too. Growth, where we overcome area after area in our life, where once upon a time we were defeated. Just like that child overcomes area after area in the whole realm of mathematics, where once upon a time it was totally ignorant.

This is growth in grace. Then, what shall we say about a child that is repeatedly failing in the first standard? Is that God's perfect will? Certainly not. We will never be sinlessly perfect here on this earth.

But we are to press on to perfection. Just like a child starting in the kindergarten class presses all the way, hoping for a PhD perhaps one day. But there is a pressing on to something higher each year.

The Bible says in Proverbs 4 and verse 12 that the path of the righteous, Proverbs 4 verse 18 actually, the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that becomes brighter and brighter as the day progresses until it reaches the perfect noonday position. Brighter and brighter. Just like the sun from dawn to midday position.

There is never a time when the sun goes down and becomes darker. It gets brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter. And that's God's perfect will for us.

Just like for a child in school, we expect it, if it's in first standard this year, we expect it to go to second standard next year. It won't reach tenth standard for another nine years. But we expect it to reach second standard the next year, the third standard the next year and so on.

God's will for you, my friend, is that you should go from one degree of glory to another. Progress, overcoming. You are not to be defeated by the same sins year after year.

You are to be an overcomer. Then why is it that some students fail and fail and fail and fail repeatedly in the same class? Well, there could be many reasons, but I think one of the fundamental reasons is a lack of the fear of God. In the book of Proverbs, chapter 9 and verse 10, it says that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

In other words, it's the first lesson in the school of wisdom. It's like learning the alphabet. You know, when you go to school, when a child goes to school, the first thing it learns is the alphabet.

What is the alphabet of wisdom? It is to fear the Lord. And it says in Proverbs 8 and verse 13, to fear the Lord is to hate evil. We hate evil because God hates evil.

When we hear that God has called us to be holy because He is holy and we are gripped by it, we begin to hate sin. Let me ask you a question. Why is it that you find when some other believer is nearby, you don't fall into some sins which you fall into when you're all by yourself? When you're alone in a room, all by yourself, there's nobody around, why is it you fall into certain sins? And if at that moment a believer walks into the room or knocks at your door and came in, you wouldn't drink of, you wouldn't think of or dream of committing that sin.

I'll tell you the reason. Because you fear that man's opinion. That man's opinion means more to you than God's.

When you're alone, only God is in the room. When that person comes in, that man is in the room. And if that person's presence can prevent you from committing a particular sin, and when that person is away and only God is there, you commit that sin, it would indicate that you do not fear God.

You fear man more than you fear God. And one of the first things you need to do, dear friend, is to pray to God and say, Lord, please help me to fear you. Please help me to mourn when I fail, when I come short.

Now let me give you, this is a challenge. If you're willing to mourn every single time you fail, every single time, you say, Lord, I slipped up. Forgive me.

Help me to fear you. I want to recognize your presence. I want to live before your face.

You will discover those who mourn are strengthened and you can be an overcomer.

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