

(Beginnings) Faith

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and faith in the Christian life, highlighting the need to trust in God's love and wisdom, and to overcome the enemy of reason.

Duration: 1:02:34

Scripture: Acts 20:21, Romans 1:16, Romans 6:14, Romans 10:8-9, James 2:5

Topics: "Salvation By Faith", "Power Of Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of salvation and its connection to faith. He emphasizes that salvation in the New Testament is not just about being saved from hell, but also about being saved from sin. The speaker encourages believers to testify and confess their faith, declaring that sin will not have dominion over them. He also highlights the need for the power of God to free believers from the strong pull of sinful desires, comparing it to the power of gravity. The sermon is based on Romans 1:16-17 and emphasizes the power of the gospel in bringing salvation to those who believe.

Transcript

Acts of the Apostles and chapter 20. Last Sunday we were considering together some of the beginnings of the Christian life and we saw how the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost preached repentance and water baptism as a symbol of one's faith through which one would receive the forgiveness of sins and also the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now we also looked at this verse in Acts chapter 20 verse 21 where the Apostle Paul tells us what he preached to Jews and Greeks.

That is, to all human beings, it was the same message, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are like two sides of one coin and we mentioned last time that what God has joined together so many preachers have put us under. We think it's a terrible thing if we try to do that in a marriage of trying to separate those whom God has joined together but it's far worse or just as bad anyway to try and separate in God's truth what he's joined together.

Think of this song that's often sung. It's a very familiar song, to God be the glory great things he has done. There's one line in that song that I never sing.

You know what it is? The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. Now I don't believe that. I don't believe the vilest offender can receive pardon from Jesus just by believing.

He's got to repent first. So if I were to sing it, I'd sing it like this. The vilest offender who repents and believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

It's far better to be a bit out of tune and sing the truth than sing a lie because it's just not true and that is the deception that one finds in a lot of the preaching of the gospel today. People are told to believe, just believe and therefore because they haven't repented almost in their entire lifetime, you find they have a very casual attitude towards sin. I've asked myself this question, why is it so many believers seem to have such a casual attitude towards sin compared to the teaching of God's word concerning sin and I've come down with this answer finally after many years that they were never taught to repent right at the beginning of their Christian life.

That's the problem. We considered that in our last study, what repentance really means. The other side of this repentance is faith.

When we repent, then we can believe. Now if we sing that song properly, if you understand, I'm sure the songwriter meant that because she was a very godly woman who wrote that song. She said the vilest offender who truly believes.

That's right. You can't truly believe unless you repent, but that doesn't come through so clearly unless you make it clear you've got to repent and believe. Then only you truly believe.

Otherwise, it's a dead faith. That's the point. So we need repentance first and then from repentance, we come to faith.

And so that's the second thing. That's what we want to consider today. The beginnings of the Christian life, faith, secondly, first repentance and second faith.

And what is faith? Now as I've thought about this through the years, I've come through with this definition and I've found personally it's been a great help to me to think of faith like this. Faith is the total leaning of our personality upon God in absolute confidence in His wisdom, love and power. Now as I've tried to understand faith like that, that it is the total leaning of my personality upon God in absolute confidence in His wisdom, love and power, I understand what faith means.

Faith is not just trying to try and believe some verse in the Bible. That's the trouble with a lot of people. They're trying to believe some verse in the Bible like some magic key by which they get everything.

You see, the thing is when you try to put your faith in a verse in the Bible without relating it to God, it can end up as a dead faith. It can be faith in some printed words. Faith is not to be in a book or in a verse, but on a person.

It must be in God Himself, in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks about having faith in Him. It doesn't speak anywhere about having faith in verses.

It's faith in Him. We need to see that very clearly. That is what faith is.

And when we lean upon Him in absolute confidence in His wisdom, love and power, that's what faith is. And when we think of the origin of sin into the world, into the human race anyway, in the Garden of Eden, when the devil came and tempted Eve to sin, notice how he tempted her to sin. He came with these words, has God really said? Isn't that interesting? That the first words that the devil spoke to the human

race were concerning God's word.

To bring a doubt concerning God's word, and to bring a doubt concerning God's word of judgment and punishment. Eve said, yes, God's told us not to eat of that tree because we'll die. And immediately the devil comes and says, you will not die.

To bring a doubt concerning, is God really reliable? Is what he has said really true? And we can be sure that he's going to come to us in the same way. To bring a doubt concerning God's promise. Is it really true what he has said? There are many, many promises in scripture, and the devil's always in the business of trying to bring doubt into our minds.

Particularly when we have prayed very much for some particular thing, and God has seen fit in his great wisdom not to answer that prayer. That's the time when the devil, that's the time when our faith is tested. I want to tell you, your faith is not tested the day after you got an answer to your prayer.

No. The day after we got an answer to our prayer, we don't know whether we really got faith or not. Because we got an answer to our prayer.

But I'll tell you when your faith is tested, the day after your prayer was not answered. When you desperately wanted something which you thought was good, you prayed for it, and God in his great wisdom, and in his great love, decided not to answer your prayer. Next day, or that day, when the result has come that your prayer is not answered, or not answered the way you expected it, then our faith is tested.

Faith in what? Not in some verse in the Bible, but is my God perfect in wisdom in not answering my prayer? Is my God perfect in love in not answering my prayer? Is my God perfect in power that he could have answered it, but he decided not to answer it? And if I can say yes to all the three, my faith is strong. I'm standing on the rock, and the floods and the storms cannot shake me or drown me. That's the way the devil came to Eve, and then he began to discuss with Eve.

And here's another thing we see, that the biggest enemy to faith is our human reason. Our human reason. Why does it say, have you ever thought of this verse in the letter of James? It's an amazing verse, I wonder whether you've noticed it.

James chapter 2, verse 5, listen my beloved brethren. Now notice the context, you need to see the context to understand this verse. The context is about rich people coming to the assembly, and poor people coming to the assembly.

In verse 2 for example, he's speaking about the rich and the poor coming to your assembly, and you're honoring the rich person by giving him a special seat, and dishonoring the poor person by giving him a small seat. He's speaking about material wealth. And then he says, my beloved brethren, verse 5, did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith? Now basically what I understand from that verse is that it is easier for a poor person to have faith than it is for a rich person.

Have you ever thought why? Because we could think of many reasons, let me tell you one. When a poor person has a sudden financial need, which money he does not have in the bank, to whom does he turn? If he's a true believer and not a beggar, he would turn to God. When the rich person has a financial need, where does he go to? To the bank.

So who has greater opportunity to develop faith? The poorer person. Another reason, generally speaking, the rich have more opportunity to study and develop their intellect and their reason. They have understood all about what Charles Darwin said and what somebody else said and what somebody else said.

The poor man's probably never even heard of Charles Darwin, and mercifully. And so, his faith is very simple. He's not disturbed by all these reasonings and doubts which clever people have put into the head of this educated man.

So he's rich in faith. Reason is the biggest enemy to simple faith in God. I'm not saying that the rich people can't have faith, I'm just saying it's more difficult.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, the publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of God before you. He didn't say you can't go, what he was saying is it's going to be a little more difficult for you because you fellows think you're so holy. And the intellectual person thinks he's so clever.

That's why it's more difficult for him. I believe a person who goes to a Bible school has more difficulty having faith than a person who studies the scriptures without going to a Bible school under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I'm not saying it's impossible, I'm saying it's more difficult to have faith, to have a living faith in God.

Because reason, the more we develop our reason in spiritual things, the more difficult it is for us to have faith. Now we need to use our reason in everything out in the world. If you're going to do business or teach chemistry or physics or maths or anything, you better use your reason.

You can't use faith over there for all that. But when it comes to God's word and the things of the spirit, reason is no help. And that's where the devil got Eve astray.

He got her into a reason, into an argument, into a discussion. Well, why do you think God has not allowed you to eat of that tree? And got Eve's thinking processes, got the mortar running in her mind to think as to why is it? Yeah, that's an interesting question. Why is it God has not answered my prayer? You know this question, why isn't it that God hasn't done it the way I expected it? Why is it God has withheld that good looking fruit from me, which looks so nice? Why is it God has withheld the answer from my prayer, which I thought is very good? Yeah, that's reason.

And the devil's got his reasons. He implies, you know, God knows that if you eat it, you will be like him. He doesn't want you to be like him.

In other words, there's some fault in God's love for you. He's a bit jealous. His love is not perfect.

His wisdom is not perfect. No. And Eve doubted God's love.

And she took the fruit. And she sinned. So what was the first, what was the way in which Eve sinned? Not by disobedience first, but by unbelief first.

Unbelief in God's love. From that unbelief came disobedience. Now the reason I point that out to you is because when we read Genesis chapter 3, we think that Eve just disobeyed.

She didn't just disobey. Read it carefully. The devil started with getting her to doubt the love of God.

And I want to tell you, brothers and sisters, that's how he leads us also into sin. Getting us to doubt God's love. Getting us to doubt God's wisdom in the way he deals with us.

And the way he has arranged circumstances for us, for example. You wonder why he has arranged circumstances for you in a particular way. Why not somebody else? In the way he has arranged it for somebody else.

This comparing oneself with other believers or other people in the world. It's all the result of using our reason. And I just want to point that out, that reason is the biggest enemy to faith.

I'll prove that to you from the scriptures. That's in Proverbs chapter 3, verse 5. Notice what it says in Proverbs 3, verse 5. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Not your head, not your brains, but with your heart.

Notice that. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And it says, don't lean upon your head.

You see the contrast there between the heart and the head? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean upon your brains. Don't rely on your brain. Don't depend on your intellect.

That is the contrast. On one side, what you should do. On the other side, what you should not do.

And I want to tell you this, you cannot do what you should do unless you don't do what you shouldn't do. In other words, you cannot trust in the Lord with all your heart unless you stop leaning upon your reason. You have to say to them, what Eve should have said to the devil was this.

My reason is not clever enough to be able to understand why. My intellect is not clever enough to be able to understand the reason why God has not allowed us to eat that tree. But one thing I know in my heart, trust in the Lord with all your heart.

I know that God loves me perfectly. And therefore, there must be some very good reason why he has told us not to eat of that tree. Then she wouldn't have sinned.

The failure was a failure of faith. And because man's failure came by faith, failure came by unbelief, salvation had to come by faith. That confidence in God's love had to be restored.

That's why it says God proves his love for us. Let's turn to Romans chapter 5. Romans chapter 5. God, verse 8, Romans 5, 8. God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That's the proof of God's love.

There, he didn't talk about love. He demonstrated it once and for all in a way in which it never needs to be demonstrated again. By sending the darling of his heart, his own beloved son, into the world to die on the cross for something that he had never done, but to take the guilt and punishment of the entire human race upon himself.

And there, God proves his love. In other words, it's not just blindly believing that Jesus died for my sins, but believing in God's love there. Because the failure with the mother of us all, Eve, and with the father of us all, Adam, was a failure of doubting God's love.

And now I have to come to the place where I believe in God's love. That's how salvation comes. I believe that when Jesus hung on the cross, there was a proof of God's love for me that all the punishment my sins

deserve, God says, I'll put it on my son so that you can be free.

And I see that not just as a legal fact. Oh, wonderful, I'm free then. Not just that, but oh God, you love me so much.

I wonder how many of us, I think it's probably the problem with a number of us because it happens very often with Christians, we lose that sense of wonder at the fact that Jesus loved us so much and died for us on the cross. Because that has become an old story for us. It's an old story.

It's so easy to lose the wonder. And I, for one, am scared of losing the wonder of it. Every now and then, I sit and meditate on it.

And I want to meditate on it as though I never heard it before in my life. As though I'm hearing it for the first time that God loved me so much, so much that He gave His Son. Oh Lord, let me never lose the wonder of that.

Let me never lose the amazement that should come into my heart to think of that. That Jesus hung on a cross and suffered and died because God loved me so much. He wanted so much to free me from my sins that He was willing to pay any price.

Jesus loved me so much that He was willing to pay any price to free me from sin. And I want to wonder at that. Always, God demonstrates His love for me so that never again in my life need I doubt God's love.

But tell me, brothers and sisters, many of us have been converted by faith in Christ many years ago. Can you say that through the years you never doubted God's love? How often we have. And there's where we should loathe and hate ourselves that despite God having demonstrated His love for us on the cross, we still doubt.

It's the same old serpent that comes and says, does God really love you? Oh, don't you think He'll sort of forsake you at the last minute? For example, so many believers are slaves to fear and anxiety. I don't want to get anybody under condemnation. But all I say is, I want you to see the root cause of the problem.

The root cause of the problem is nothing other than an unawareness of the perfect nature of God's love for us. The Bible says, perfect love casts out fear. There's absolutely no other way to be free from fear and anxiety except by asking God to show us how perfectly He loves us.

When He says, I will never, never, never leave you nor forsake you. And I'm told by those who have studied the Greek language that in Hebrews 13, the word is three times mentioned, three negatives. It's almost Father, Son and Holy Spirit saying it.

I will never, never, never leave you or forsake you. Impossible. Therefore, we boldly say, the Lord is my helper.

That's where faith is founded. Faith is not founded merely on a fact, Jesus died, but behind that fact, that behind that, God demonstrates His love. That's what Eve had to believe in.

God loves me. That's what we have to believe in. God loves me.

And here's the proof that He sent Jesus to die on the cross. God hates sin. That's why He wants me to repent.

That's why He wants me to give up sin. I need to see that God's desire is to free me totally from sin, not forgive me and leave me in it. It's a terrific grief to me when I see so many believers trying to defend sinfulness in the believer.

What's the big charge that many people level against us? They say we're preaching too much on victory over sin as if that's a big crime. Who is the one who is happy if we stop preaching on victory over sin? I'll tell you who will be happy. It's the devil, sure.

Who's the one who's disturbed when we preach about victory over sin? Is it God or the devil? Sure. There's no doubt about that. So if anybody gets disturbed, you know which side he's on.

No doubt in my mind as to which side he's on. If he gets disturbed when we preach about being free from sin. Sin shall not have dominion over you.

Because you're not under law, but under grace. Romans 6, 14. Well, the devil's disturbed when you preach that.

It's alright if you memorize it, keep it in your mind. But if you're going to live it and you're going to preach it, the devil's really going to be disturbed. But that comes out of an understanding of God's love.

Why does God not want sin to have dominion over me? That's like asking, why is a father so disturbed when his child has got leprosy? Now, many of you are fathers and mothers here. Supposing one of your children, think of this personally. Think of one of your children right now and you discover tomorrow morning that he's got leprosy.

Patches on his hand. He's got leprosy. And you say, well, we have to get a little bit of leprosy after all, it's not so serious.

What type of father or mother are you? Do you want your child to have one or two patches left? Or do you want him to be completely healed from all patches? Tell me! That's the type of father God is when He looks at His children with leprosy. Leprosy. And I tell you, if only we could see our soul.

The thing is, we can't see it because it's invisible. If only we could take out our soul and see it. We'd see these patches worse than leprosy.

I'd rather have leprosy than the patches of sin on my soul. Bitterness towards somebody. Jealousy.

Patches on the soul. Love of money, big patch there. And a quarrelsome attitude, outbursts of anger, sexual lust.

Patches, patches, patches. And I just look at it and say, well, Lord, forgive me. This is like this.

And I have to fall into these things once in a while. That's the devil. It's the devil.

Once we see God's love, he wants to deliver me from all those patches of leprosy in my soul. Lord, I believe that. If you believe in God's love, you've got to believe in victory over sin.

I'll tell you, it's impossible to believe in God's love and say you don't believe in victory over sin, that you only believe in forgiveness. That's a lot of nonsense. God wants us to be free from sin.

And he wants to forgive us, of course, because the guilt of our past life is so black that separates me from God that he wanted to remove it and he was willing to do everything to remove it and send Jesus to die on the cross to remove it. And now what does he want me to do? Does he want me to live such a life where I again go and bring all those big black blotches between me and God? No, he wants me to be free. That's a result of faith.

I believe God's love for me is perfect. I believe his wisdom is perfect. That when he planned a salvation for you and me, it was a perfect salvation.

It could not have been better. Absolute confidence in God's wisdom, in the salvation he has planned, that it's not a cheap salvation where he just forgives our sins. But it's a salvation that forgives us and frees us also.

And that his power is also perfect. I told you faith is total leaning of my personality upon God in absolute confidence, in his perfect wisdom, his perfect love, and his absolute total power. And that means I have confidence that God's power is almighty enough to help me overcome every temptation.

Are you a slave to anger? My dear brother and sister, I just want to tell you, have faith. God's power is mightier than the power of anger that dwells in your flesh. If you've never believed that, believe it tonight.

Have you been a slave to sexual lust in your thought life for years? Always defeated. Maybe it gets a little better now, but still defeated. When will you believe that God's mighty power through the Holy Spirit is mightier than the power of sexual lust in your flesh? Victory is by faith.

Just like forgiveness of sins is by faith. Faith that God's power is perfect. Absolute.

Are you a slave to depression? Bad moods? Gloom? I was like that for years. Till I believed God's power is greater. Why in the world should I be a slave to depression? Or to be bad moods? Or to bad moods? Why in the world should any human being ever see me in a bad mood at any time of the day or night? And especially the people in my home who see me day and night.

Should they ever see me in a bad mood? Is God's power not mighty enough to deliver me from bad moods totally? Or can He help me only 12 hours a day and leave me defeated the other 12 hours of the day? What type of salvation would that be? Or can He deliver me only 5 days in a week? Because couple of days He wants me to have this leprosy of depression. That's a lot of garbage. I'll tell you.

That's from the devil, that garbage. Throw it where it belongs. In the sewage tank.

Flush it out. All that rubbish. We believe God's word.

God does not want me to have leprosy 7 days of the week. Never. Some people, the devils told them this lie.

You know what this lie is? You got to sin now and then, otherwise you won't be humble. Oh! And my reason thinks about that. See, yeah, that's right.

That's right. I become proud if I get victory. And I've got to be humble.

So I've got to fall in sin now and then. Imagine somebody telling Jesus that. Jesus, you've got to fall in sin now and then, otherwise you won't be humble.

You're too proud. Always living in victory. Height of stupidity.

Jesus said, learn from me. For I am humble, He said. I am humble in heart.

And He never sins. He never sins. And He was humble.

Is it possible never to sin and be humble? Look at Jesus. But you say, I've seen some people who talk about victory, they are so proud. Yes.

I've seen some people who said they had forgiveness of sins and lived like the devil. So what? I've seen some counterfeit hundred rupee notes. So what? Does that prove there's no real hundred rupee note? I've seen a lot of counterfeit Christians.

I think I've seen more than you. People who talk about victory and don't live in it. I'm not fooled by that, just like I'm not fooled by a counterfeit hundred rupee note.

Yes, when I get a hundred rupee note, I look carefully. And when we got to look carefully, when people talk about victory, if it doesn't work in their daily life, it's counterfeit. Yeah, that's right.

But there is the real thing. Let's turn to Romans chapter 1. And verse 16 and 17. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Now notice a number of things Paul says here. First of all, he says, I'm not ashamed of this gospel. This is such a wonderful gospel.

I'm not ashamed of it. And you know what gospel he's talking about? I'll tell you. Always read a verse in its context.

It's the gospel, verse 1, of God. It's the gospel, verse 2, which is promised in the Scriptures. It's the gospel, verse 3, of Christ who came in our flesh.

And the gospel, verse 4, who though he came in the flesh, was raised from the dead because he had the spirit of holiness. That means he never sinned. In other words, it's a gospel about Christ coming in our flesh and living a holy life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

He says, this gospel, I'm not ashamed of. No. Why? He doesn't say because it is a wonderful mystery or a wonderful message, which is all true.

But he uses another word to describe the gospel. Did you notice it in verse 16? What does he call the gospel? What is it? The power of God. Think of that phrase.

The power of God for salvation. Now, I want to ask you this. Today, does God have to display His power in any way to forgive your sin? No.

Forgiveness of sins has got nothing to do with God's power. It's just the fact that God will keep His word. That if you repent and you believe that Jesus died for your sins and you confess Him as Lord, He will forgive your sin.

There is no display of power there. It's just a fact. Forgiveness of sins is a proof of God's love.

True. And it's a legal fact in the courts of God. But where is this power of God? The power of God is needed not just not to forgive me, but to free me.

Ah, there we know we need a power. Why is it, for example, we fall into the lusts of the flesh? Because the power in those lusts is so strong. We need another power to free us from those lusts.

It's like the law of gravity. You drop a piece of steel and it goes down. Why does it go down? Because the law of gravity, the power is pulling it down.

But the other day I saw some steel moving around in the air. Did you see that? Yes. That airplane moving up there.

How in the world did that not get pulled down by the power of gravity? Because there is another power. It's called the power of aerodynamics. It lifts it up so that though this power is still trying to pull it down, it just doesn't fall.

That's a picture of how the lusts of the flesh try to pull us down and theories won't work. It's an actual power that lifts that plane up, not some theory. And it's an actual power that must lift me up so that the lusts of flesh don't pull me down.

That's the gospel. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of. It is the power of God unto salvation from this law of gravity of the lusts of the flesh pulling me down, unto salvation from that.

Now the sad part of it is it's not for everybody. Because it says that in that verse. It's only to everyone who believes.

You say, I don't believe that I can be free from sin's power. Well, that's not for you then. Obviously it's not for you.

It all depends on how much we believe. How much we experience of God's salvation depends on how much we believe. And that's where I've got to stop using my reason.

Have you ever talked about salvation with a Hindu or a Muslim? I have. And they always bring reason. It's very difficult for them to simply believe that Jesus died on the cross for their sin.

Reason, reason. Have you tried speaking the simple gospel with a clever intellectual man? Reason, reason, reason. Their reason hinders them from simple faith.

It's the same with many believers when it comes to freedom from sin's power. Reason, reason, reason. How can that be? But we are like this.

We are human and we have to do this and we have to do that. Reason, reason, reason. Instead of believing God's simple word, Romans 6.14, sin shall not have dominion over you.

How is it we receive forgiveness of sins? If there's any person sitting here who has received forgiveness of sins, I can tell you without a doubt you received it by faith. Repentance and faith. Nobody could have received forgiveness of sins if he didn't believe that Jesus died on the cross.

Believed God's word, His promise, had confidence in God. It's exactly the same way when it comes to freedom from sin's power. It's impossible if a person doesn't believe.

Impossible. Even God can do nothing for a man who doesn't believe. That's why out there in the world there are so many unbelievers for whom Jesus died, but whose sins are not forgiven.

For whom even God cannot do anything because they won't believe. They won't believe that Jesus died for me. And I hope there's nobody sitting here who's not sure of your sins being forgiven.

I hope you're sure that you believe that God proved His love for you. What about you children? How old can you be before you become a Christian? I've heard of people who became Christians and who proved it by a lifetime of serving God who were converted when they were four years old. Four years.

It's possible to receive Jesus as Savior and to believe that Jesus has saved me. Why not? If God's done that for others, He can do that for you children. It's easy if you believe.

It's very difficult if you can't believe. If you think there's some goodness in you which makes you worthy, then there's no hope of salvation for you. But if you say, Lord, I'm a sinner.

Even though you're a four-year-old child, you've done wrong things. You're a sinner. But Jesus died for you and you believe that.

He rose up from the dead. That's another thing you've got to believe in. Jesus rose up from the dead.

He's living. I believe in a living Jesus, not in a dead one. I believe in Jesus.

You can be forgiven and you can be sure by faith. Not because you see, you actually saw Jesus hanging on the cross, but you believe God. You have confidence that God is true.

He tells the truth in the same way when God says, sin shall not have dominion over you. That's not going to work for everyone. Definitely not.

It's according to one's faith. Now, you've heard this illustration. I've used it before from Matthew chapter 9. But to me, this is one of the clearest pictures of, it makes what faith is more vivid to me.

Matthew chapter 9 and verse 27 to 29. As Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, have mercy on us, son of David. How many blind men were there? Two.

When He came into the house, the two blind men came to Him. And they said, we want our blind eyes to be opened. And Jesus did not heal them because they asked.

That's the thing I want you to notice. You don't get something from Jesus merely because you ask. There's a wonderful promise for all unbelievers.

It's one of the glorious promises for unbelievers. In James chapter 1, verse 6 and 7, which says, those who do not believe will receive nothing from the Lord. Have you ever read that promise? The one promise in the Bible for unbelievers.

Those who do not believe can expect to get nothing from the Lord. Yeah? We cannot get anything from the Lord merely because we ask for it. Some people think, if I ask and ask and I fast and I pray and I cry out to God and I come for all the meetings and I pray 2,000 times, God has to answer.

I'm sorry. That's like these Buddhists out there in Tibet. They turn their wheel 2,000 times to think that God will finally pray.

Some people's prayer is like hit and luck. I've heard one place where they have an idol and the way they pray to their idol is they write down their prayer on a piece of paper and they wrap it up in some wet mud and fling it at the idol. And if it sticks on the idol, that means your prayer is heard.

If it falls off the idol, that means it's not going to be heard. A lot of Christians are like that. They fling it out in the prayer meeting.

Don't know whether it's stuck there or fallen down. Don't know. Now, that's not Christianity.

That's heathenism. Because we pray so many times or this hit and miss or get, I don't know. That's not the way we are supposed to pray.

Lord, I have confidence in Your love. I have confidence in Your wisdom. I have confidence in Your power.

You're my Father through Jesus Christ. Well, the blind men came to Jesus and they asked, Oh God, please heal my eyes. Oh Father, please heal my eyes.

Lord Jesus, please heal my eyes. No results. Jesus asked them one question.

Do you believe that I am able to do this for you? Very important question. Lord, please forgive my sin. He won't forgive it before He asks you this question.

Do you believe I am able to do this for you? Yes, Lord, I believe You are able to forgive me. Alright. According to your faith.

What's the answer? Verse 29. According to your faith, be it done unto you. Matthew 9.29 Now the illustration I wanted to make here is this.

Picture Jesus sitting inside the house in a room. And these blind men going in one by one. And the first blind man goes in.

It's his turn. And Jesus asks him, Do you believe that I am able to open your eyes? And he says, Well, Lord, I'm sure you can open at least one eye. That will be enough for me.

At least I can see the road and know where I'm walking. And the Lord says, Be it done for you according to your faith. And he comes out with one eye open.

Wonderful. I tell you, isn't that good news? Don't you think that's good news for a blind man? What do you think? It's not the best news, but it's good news that one eye can be opened. He just jumps for joy and goes all over town saying, Jesus can open one eye, you blind fellows.

Did you know that? And by the time he's gone out, the other person has gone in to see Jesus. And Jesus says, Do you believe I can open your eyes? He says, Sure, Lord. Both eyes.

He comes out with both eyes open. And he meets this other fellow who started the one-eyed denomination already that Jesus opens one eyes. And this man says, That's wrong.

Jesus can open two eyes. And what do they call him there? Heretic. How dare you preach that Jesus.

I had a personal experience of opening one eye. How dare you go and say that Jesus opens two eyes. You must be telling lies.

You must be bluffing. What's the difference? It's a question of how much each person had faith for. That's exactly the difference between one believer and another today, brothers and sisters.

One person goes to Jesus. And Jesus says, Do you believe I can forgive your sin? He says, Yes. He comes out with his sins forgiven.

Good news. He jumps all over town and says Jesus can forgive sins. The other person goes and says, Lord, I believe you can not only forgive sin, you can free me from my dirty lusts.

You can free me from my depression. You can free me from my anger. You can free me from my fear.

You can free me from my anxieties. You can free me from my lusts. You can free me from my outbursts of anger.

You can free me from my bitterness and everything. And he comes out. And it's heresy to all these people who believe only in forgiveness.

It's the same old story. It's a question of how much faith you have. According to your faith, be it unto you.

Because Jesus' answer to every person is the same thing. Do you believe I can free you from the guilt of sin? Yeah, Lord, I believe. According to your faith, be it unto you.

Do you believe I can free you from your dirty, lustful thoughts? Most of the time, Lord. According to your faith, be it unto you. Most of the time you'll get victory over sin.

Now and then you'll be defeated. Another person says, Do you believe I can free you from lustful thoughts? All the time. Yes, Lord, all the time.

Why not? According to your faith, be it unto you. What's the difference in the answer the Lord gave to all these people? No difference. Absolutely none.

Why do we find so much difference among believers today? You know what the difference is? There is no partiality with God. The answer He gives to everybody is exactly the same. And you find believers living in 10,000 different levels.

Because they have 10,000 different levels of faith. God's word is the same. It's a question of how much confidence we have in God.

The vast majority do not believe. We read that 600,000 people came out of Egypt, were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, were baptized in water in the Red Sea, were baptized in the cloud, symbol of the Holy Spirit, and came out into the wilderness on their way to Canaan. And out of those 600,000 people, you know how many people entered? Two.

Why? Because only two believed. According to your faith, be it unto you. Yeah? 600,000 people believed.

That God can't really. These giants are too powerful. Too strong.

How in the world can God deliver us from these giants? They ruled there in Canaan for don't know how long. And these giants that have ruled in my life, anger, lust, wickedness, that have ruled in my life for 20, 30, 40 years, how can God drive it out? And it says we are like grasshoppers in the presence of these giants that have ruled our life for so many years. But Joshua and Caleb said, so what? So what if they

ruled Canaan for so many years? God is powerful enough to drive them out.

They didn't look at their muscles. They looked at God. And it's not by our determination that we overcome sin.

It's by faith in God. Lord, if you don't fulfill Romans 6, 14 in my life when I trust you, it's your name that's going to be dishonored. Remember that.

Because you promised it. If you don't keep your word when I trust you, well, your name is going to be dishonored. But be sure, God won't let his name be dishonored.

If you trust him, it will be done to you exactly according to your faith. It's an exact measure. If your faith is this much, you get that much.

If it increases 1%, you get that much more. If it increases 10%, you get that much more. If it increases 50%, you get that much more.

So who determines how much we get from God? You. We can use another illustration. When there's a great shortage of water, the municipal taps are all dry, the wells are dry, and suddenly, one day, it starts raining.

Wonderful. And all the houses, people put vessels outside the house to collect the water. And you find when the rain has stopped, one man has got more water in his house.

Another man's got very little. Why? Was it because God sent more rain there and less rain here? No. It's because one man just put a little cup outside.

That's all he got. Another man took out all the tubs and buckets and everything he had and filled all of them. According to what you put, you receive.

It's so simple. Salvation begins by faith. We read in Romans 1. Let's turn there again.

Romans 1, verse 16. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation. I want to say something about that word salvation.

That in the New Testament, it never once speaks about salvation from hell. Never. It always speaks about salvation from sin.

And the result of which is salvation from hell. But it's salvation from sin. What is the first promise in the New Testament? Matthew 1, verse 21.

Thou shalt call His name Jesus, because He shall save His people, not from hell. He shall save His people, not from the wrath of God. He shall save His people from sin.

When you finish the Old Testament, and you come into the first page of the New Testament, what is it which hits you in the face as the first promise in the New Testament? It's the promise of what God can do for us in the New Covenant, which He could not do in the Old Covenant. Right there in the first page of the New Covenant. He will save us from our sins.

Now you know the difference between forgiving us our sins, and saving us from our sins. Let me use an illustration. If my, if outside the house, there are a lot of people digging up the road, and I tell one of my

children, or my children, don't go near there, you may accidentally fall inside.

And they don't listen to me. One of them doesn't listen to me, and wanders too near that pit, and falls into the pit. From the bottom of the pit, cries out, Daddy! And I come running out to see what's happened, and he says, Daddy, I'm sorry.

I disobeyed you. And I say, alright son, I forgive you. Goodbye.

What have I done? I have forgiven him, but I haven't saved him. I've left him in the pit. That's the salvation many people believe in.

Lord, I've sinned, I'm in the pit. Lord says, alright, I forgive you. God bless you.

And He goes off. And here I am, in the miry pit. That's a pretty useless salvation.

He is, thou shalt call His name Jesus, because He shall save His people, not in their sins, but from their sins. If only we'd believe that. Brothers and sisters, I'm sorry that for so many years, I didn't believe it, and I wasted so many years of my life.

I wish somebody had rammed this into my head and into my heart 23 years ago. Boy, how thankful I'd have been to such a man. If he had caught me and said, listen, this is what God says.

And put God's word into me. Sin will not have dominion over you. It will not have dominion over you.

And now as I look back, I look at all those well-meaning elders of the assembly I happened to belong to those days. Never once did any of them tell me, Romans 6, 14. And I know the reason now.

They didn't experience it themselves. They didn't know it in their life. How could they tell anyone else about it? By faith, we can have everything that God wants us to have.

Notice 2nd Peter, chapter 1. 2nd Peter, chapter 1. We read verse 3. Here's something about the power of God again. We saw the power of God unto salvation in Romans 1, 16. To everyone who believes.

In 2nd Peter 1, verse 3, we read Seeing that the power of God Here's that phrase. That phrase again. Seeing that the power of God His divine power has given to us Read every word carefully here.

The power of God unto salvation has granted us Now the word granted means it's a free gift. You don't have to pay for it. It's free.

Anyone who wants it can take it. It's only by faith. What has He given us? Look at this fantastic phrase.

Everything If it had stopped there we'd be claiming Cadillac cars, four story houses, and all types of things. Ice creams every day. But it doesn't stop there.

Everything pertaining to life and godliness When the New Testament speaks of life it doesn't mean existing. All people in the world are existing. That's not life.

Life is the life of Jesus. Everything pertaining to the life of Jesus and to true godliness of character has been granted to us. Right? Verse 4 He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises so that we can partake of the divine nature.

Do you believe you can partake of the divine nature? Do you believe you can not just bless those who curse you that can be an external thing but to love those who curse you. You know I got revelation on this verse the other day. I'll just show it to you.

Matthew 5:44 In the King James Version it's more expanded. Matthew 5:44 it says Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you. But what I saw was that it's possible for me to bless those who curse me without loving them.

It's possible for me to do good to those who hate me without loving them. But I saw that's why Jesus said first of all love. In other words the first phrase is the foundation for everything else.

Love your enemies and then in other words if you don't start there you got it wrong. From the heart, from the innermost being, love them. Bless those who curse you.

If there is one human being in the world who curses me, whom I cannot bless, whom I cannot love. If there is one person in the world who hates me, whom I cannot do good to, well I'm living a substandard Christian life. Sure, it's not just a question of saying I forgive them.

There are some people who say I've got nothing against you brother. Well that's the trouble, you've got nothing. You must have something, you must have love.

No, you're saying I've got nothing against you brother. You know what's the meaning of lukewarmness? Now I'll give you a definition of coldness, lukewarmness and being hot. You know the church in Laodicea, you're neither cold nor hot but lukewarm.

Now listen to this carefully, here's what it means to be cold, here's what it means to be lukewarm, here's what it means to be hot. To be hot means brother I love you with all my heart, and I really mean that. And even if you're not a brother in Christ, you're an unbeliever, you hate me, I love you with all my heart.

That's being hot. To be cold means, oh I hate the sight of you, I'm bitter, I won't forgive you, that's cold. What is it to be neither cold nor hot? Brother I've got nothing against you.

That's the lukewarm people, I've got nothing against you brother. Don't think that's spirituality, that's a deception. It's one of the deceptions of the devil, you must have nothing in your heart against your brother.

Where does it say that? It says you've got to have love in your heart, not nothing. I must have faith, Lord you can do that in my life. You can write your laws on my heart and in my mind, I believe that.

Yeah, if you believe according to your faith, be it unto you. And it will work in your life, you'll see the reality of it. I praise God for a little bit of the reality of it I see in my own life, that's given me the confidence to say that it's really true.

But I want to say this dear brothers and sisters, the thing that grieves God so much is that we lack so much confidence in Him. Hebrews 11, we read in verse 6, without faith it is impossible to please God. Shall I read that again? Now listen to me reading it in another way.

You come to all the meetings, but you don't have faith, you can't please God. You read your Bible every day and you live an upright life, but you don't have faith, you can't please God. You pray all night, but you don't have faith, it doesn't please God.

You give 25% of your income to God's work, but you don't have faith, it doesn't please God. You've given up your job and become a full time worker, sacrificing, going out into the jungles, sleeping out in the open, getting wet and getting hot in the sun, struggling without food, doesn't please God if you don't have faith. Without faith, doesn't say anywhere in the Bible, without sacrifice you cannot please God, or without giving money you cannot please God, or without giving up your job you cannot please God.

All wrong, heathen ideas so many Christians have. What's the Bible say? Without faith, the thing that God's looking for in your life and mine is faith, because sin came into the human race through unbelief. God says, I want a people who have cleansed themselves of this poison of unbelief and have faith, who have confidence in me that I love them perfectly, my ways are full of wisdom and my power is perfect.

Now dear brothers and sisters, do you know what it means to be a Christian? To be a living testimony in the world that I have perfect confidence in God's love for me. Look at my life, come and see every area of my life and you will see that I act in such a way, I speak in such a way, I live in such a way, I think in such a way that I have perfect confidence in God loves me perfectly. He's demonstrated it on Calvary's cross.

That's not just a theory I sing about once in a while. It's real. God's wisdom is perfect.

If there are prayers He has not answered in my life, fine. His wisdom is perfect. If there are things He has not done for me the way I expected, that's fine.

His wisdom is perfect. If there are circumstances around me that are difficult, that's fine. His wisdom is perfect.

Perfect. And His power is perfect. There is no lust in my flesh that is greater than the power of God.

If I were to ask you this question, please take a paper and pencil and write down the answer to this question. Which is greater? The power of the lust in your flesh or the power of the Holy Spirit? Every single one of us will say the power of the Holy Spirit. Then why are we defeated by the lust in our flesh? Because we don't actually believe it in our heart.

We believe it in our head. Do you think there is a single thing written in the Bible which the devil doesn't believe? James says very clearly, you believe there is one God? Well, that doesn't make you very special because the devil also believes. He does something more.

He trembles. You believe that Jesus is the Son of God? The devil believes that. You believe Jesus came in the flesh? Do you know the devil believes that too? You believe Jesus died on the cross? He rose up from the dead? Oh, the devil believes that.

You believe that sin cannot have dominion over you? The devil believes that too. The point is it doesn't come from the heart. It's just head knowledge.

Oh, yeah. It's true. It's true.

It's true. But Lord, I really trust you. I really trust you.

You're going to free me from sin's power because your word says so. You love me. You don't want leprosy spots on my heart, my soul.

Free me. Give me a pure life. I have confidence in you.

I trust you. And I want to say one more thing. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

If you trust in your heart, you will speak with your mouth. The Bible says in Romans chapter 10 and verse 8 and 9, with the heart we believe, with the mouth we confess unto salvation. What we believe in our heart, we are to confess with our mouth.

That's the way to build up our faith. Even if you don't have victory over sin. Do you believe Romans 6.14? Confess it with your mouth until it becomes reality.

You fall. You fall for the 15,000th time. You get up the 15,000th time and say, sin shall still not have dominion over me one of these days.

And then maybe after the 25,000th time, all of a sudden you find that dirty lust which made you a slave for so many years. You're its master. Hallelujah.

It's really a wonderful salvation to everyone who believes. No wonder Paul could say after experiencing it for 25 years or so, I'm not ashamed of this gospel. It's the power of God.

I find it freeing me more and more and more and more. It began way back there many years ago with the forgiveness of sins and it's gone on from there. It didn't stop there.

He says it's from faith to faith, Romans 1.17. From one step to another, faith for another thing, faith for another thing to believe that Jesus frees me more and more to help me to partake of His nature. We have to confess it with our lips. And I want to encourage everyone of us to confess with our lips.

That's why we place such an emphasis in our assembly on not just one man preaching. Well, we have it in teaching sessions like this but then we also have at least one meeting a week where we encourage everybody, brothers and sisters, to testify. If you can't say anything else, get up and give one word of testimony.

I believe that sin won't have dominion over me. It's amazing what that will do. The confession of our lips of hope, I believe it will be true.

Because then you're taking a stand on God's side. You're not ashamed of it. In a world which says no, you take a stand with Joshua and Caleb and says we can overcome the giants by the power of God.

How many of us will take that stand with God? Like Moses said, I feel like saying who is on the Lord's side? Who will stand up and make that confession in the coming days? Sin will not have dominion over me. It's not true yet. Don't tell lies.

It's not true yet, but it's going to be true. And you keep on confessing it until one day it becomes a reality. If you wait, oh, I'll confess it when it becomes a reality.

I'll tell you the chances are it'll never become a reality because you don't believe it. If you believed it, you'd confess it with your mouth. Very important.

The confession of our mouth, even forgiveness of sins. If your sins are forgiven, it's very important to confess it publicly. My sins are forgiven.

Jesus has saved me. He's blotted out my sins. When the devil comes and makes a list of your sins to you, tell him, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me.

When the devil tries to frighten you with fears and anxieties, tell him, the Lord will never leave me nor forsake me. He works all things for good. That's the confession of our faith.

The Bible says they overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony concerning the blood of the Lamb. That's the thing. They give their testimony to the devil saying, the blood of Jesus cleanses me.

God's word says, I can have victory. I can partake of God's nature. Let's do that more and more in the days to come.

Let's bow before God now.

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