

Blessed is He Who is Not Offended in Jesus

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living by God's word daily, not just understanding it intellectually or sharing it with others. It delves into the concept of trusting God's ways even when we don't fully understand, using the example of John the Baptist's expectations of the Messiah. The message highlights the need to not be offended by God's rebukes but to trust His ultimate plan, appreciating His work in our lives even when we face challenges. Additionally, it explores the progression of spiritual growth symbolized by the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Canaan, illustrating the ongoing process of conquering sin in our lives until we become like Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 4:4, Acts 1:3, Acts 1:6, Matthew 11:11, Malachi 4:6, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Galatians 5:24, Joshua 13:1

Topics: "Living by God's Word", "Trusting God's Plan"

Description

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Transcript

We had to be very careful that I speak from my own experience in my younger days of getting bright ideas from scripture and profound thoughts, but not taking them seriously in my daily life. It was a wonderful thought there and something that I could bless others with, but not actually taking it seriously day by day in my life. So I've come to see more and more that God gives us his word for us to live by it.

It was the first words of Jesus in the temptation, man shall live not by bread, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And we know that that doesn't just refer to the written scripture, which proceeded, past tense, out of the mouth of God many years ago, but here the reference is to what proceeds right now. That means from the Bible, I hear a word that God spoke to my heart from some passage, just like you guys were sharing now.

And then Jesus said man has to live by that, man shall live by that word that proceeded out of the mouth of God today for you personally. So it is not meant for just for me to understand, or it's good to understand,

definitely, and it's good to share it with others. It's more blessed to give than to receive.

So it's good that we give, God's word we receive, but man shall live by it, it's very important. So I see here, I mean, a lot of things you would have already heard in the message from all that Jesus taught and also probably shared before I came on, but I was thinking of how when Jesus spoke to the disciples of John, it was almost like a rebuke that he was giving to this fantastic prophet, John the Baptist, in 11.6, don't get offended at me just because you're still in prison. And you were expecting that I'd do a miracle for you, to deliver you, because people had the, I don't know whether John had a clear understanding of what the Messiah was.

He did say this is the Lamb of God that's going to take away the sin of the world. And he also said this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit, but I wonder whether growing up in the Jewish culture, whether he felt that the Messiah would liberate Israel from the Roman rule, from the rule of Herod and all the others, because, you know, the disciples who walked with him for three and a half years and who heard so much about the kingdom of heaven from him. And at the end of that, after the resurrection, when he spoke to them again, we read in Acts 1 that Jesus spoke for 40 days to his disciples at different times, not continuously, Acts 1.3. And he spoke about the kingdom of God.

I mean, that's what he'd spoken of for three and a half years. And he spoke about it again, Acts 1.3, about the kingdom of God. And then he says, now wait for the promise of the Father.

And the question then that comes to them is, what is that promise? Verse 6, Acts 1.6, are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel? That's the promise, that Israel will be free, will be the head of the nations. After three and a half years of teaching them about the kingdom of God, in those 40 days we read in verse 3, speaking the kingdom of God, still their mind was so set that Israel is going to be the head of the nations and will deliver us from the Roman rule. So if that was true for those disciples, one can imagine that it was John the Baptist also would have had that in the back of his mind.

And that's why he was wondering, how in the world can this Messiah, who's going to deliver us from the Roman rule, still be here, leave me here in this prison? And then Jesus said, don't get offended. There are many things about my ways which you don't understand. It may lead you through suffering, but if you don't get offended and believe that I have the best for you, then you will not get offended.

If you can believe through the darkest night. And what I wanted to point out was having given that rebuke, a very gentle rebuke for the disciples of John to go back and tell him, because John will ask him, what did he say? He said, well, he said, don't get offended, even though you're in prison, because outside prison, verse 5, the blind are receiving the sight and the lame are walking and the lepers are being cleansed, the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised up, and all types of miracles are happening, and don't get offended that no miracle is taking place for you. It's a bit of a gentle rebuke.

But once those men, verse 7, had gone away, verse 7, then he begins to appreciate John the Baptist. He didn't want them to hear what he was going to say about John the Baptist, that this was the greatest man ever born of women, verse 11. He protects us from hearing, I thought of this, you know, that sometimes the Lord can be very, very happy with us, with the way we are living, denying ourselves, seeking to please Him, all that we go through, and how we faithfully accept whatever trials and suffering comes our way.

But what we hear from Him may be a word of rebuke, because He wants us to trust Him. But behind our backs, He'll be appreciating us, and that's a great encouragement. So don't get offended when you hear a

word of rebuke in a meeting, in a church meeting, or when you read the scripture.

That's just a challenge, to help you to grow a little higher. It does not mean that Jesus did not appreciate all the sacrifice John the Baptist made, for His name's sake, out there in the wilderness, preaching the gospel, preaching the good news that the Messiah was coming. And we must never, never think that the Lord does not appreciate all the little self-denials we've made, and the stand we have taken against Babylonian Christendom, and everything else, every stand that you've taken for the Lord through the years, He may not tell you to your face that He appreciates it, but He does.

Because many times, you know, in our battle, I mean, I myself, as we struggle through different circumstances and problems and pressures, sometimes we wish, I said, Lord, can you just say to me that I'm your beloved Son, in whom you're well-pleased? He's never told me. So we just press on in faith, just continuing to deny ourselves and continuing to be faithful. So that's an encouragement for me, to see that when He rebukes John the Baptist to His face, He appreciates him so tremendously behind His back, and He says that the least in the kingdom of heaven, that means the least in the new covenant, we are, can rise to a greater height than John the Baptist.

It's a fantastic word, that we who are the least in the church, if you enter the kingdom of heaven, means the new covenant can rise higher than John the Baptist. John the Baptist was such a bold man. But we have to face the fact that sin had dominion over him, because he was not under grace.

And anyone who's not under grace, however wholehearted he may be, zealous, faithful, sin has dominion over them in some area, and one evidence of that is here, he lost faith. And I'm sure in other areas, too. I don't believe John the Baptist had victory over anger and lust and the things mentioned in Matthew chapter 5. But the least in the kingdom of heaven can enter Matthew chapter 5, and the promises there.

John the Baptist may not, wouldn't have, didn't have grace to love his enemies, but we have grace to love our enemies. So that is, I always say that the greatest saints in the Old Testament are not our example. Our example is always Jesus.

Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. So even though we find many, many good things, I mean, John the Baptist has been a hero of mine for years from my young age, because of the bold way in which he stood for the Lord. But ultimately, when it comes to a life of overcoming, it's folks like Paul who could enter that life.

If John the Baptist was living in the new covenant, he'd have probably been one of the greatest saints we acknowledge. The other thing I want to say here is that the Lord said here, verse 14, He told the Jews, if this is, if you accept it, then this is Elijah who is to come. But the Jews did not accept.

And because the Jews did not accept, see Jesus was referring to the last two verses of the Old Testament, Malachi, I will send Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Those are the last two verses of Malachi, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. And the Jews were saying, this may be the Elijah that Malachi spoke about.

And Jesus said, yes, if you accept him. But they did not accept. And so the Jews were rejected, and that's not the Elijah to come.

And therefore, the promise in Malachi chapter 4 is still not fulfilled. Because the condition here is, if you accept it, then this is Elijah. But they didn't accept it.

And so before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, as it says in Malachi 4, God is going to send Elijah. And it's not Elijah himself who's in heaven. But the Elijah of the last days is the body of Christ, the new man, the one new man, Christ.

Christ in his church, the body of Christ, as one person in unity, is going to be the Elijah to proclaim that God wants to restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. And that's a very, very important thing in God's eyes, the restoration of a godly family life. And if you don't do that, it says in Malachi 4, I'll smite the earth with a curse, Malachi 4, 6. It's so very important.

And we must remember that in our pursuit of building the church. Never forget that the spirit of Elijah is seeking to restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. There must be no distance between parents and children in our families.

There must be a closeness in these last days. God wants families that are united, families that are godly. And that's the ministry of the body of Christ, the last days Elijah.

So the opposite of curse is a blessing. So if he says, if you don't do this, I'll smite the earth with a curse, I presume that if you do it, you'll bring his blessing upon us. So we have to fulfill that which God has called us to do, because the Jews did not accept John the Baptist.

That was not the first coming of Christ, did not solve the problem. So that's why there is a second coming of Christ. See, Jesus often illustrated a truth with an illustration, a story, or a picture.

So I have found in my study of the scriptures that principle. That's why I use so many illustrations in my own messages, because it makes things more clear. The children of Israel in the Old Testament coming out of Egypt with the blood of the lamb put outside the door is a picture of deliverance from the world.

Egypt is the world. Pharaoh is Satan, delivered from the world and the Satan and through the blood of Christ. Into the Red Sea is a picture of water baptism.

The cloud coming down from heaven is a picture of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But that's only the beginning of the journey. For many Christians, that's all.

I'm saved. I'm on my way to heaven. But you read that Old Testament story, that's only the beginning.

God's final aim was to get them into Canaan's land, to occupy the whole land of Canaan. That's the new covenant life, the land flowing with milk and honey. But they did not go there.

They lived in the wilderness for 40 years, which is a picture of born again, but living under the law, under the old covenant, in the wilderness, constantly defeated. But a day came when they went in and going through the River Jordan is a picture of death to self. That's where Jesus was baptized, symbolizing his own dying to his own self-life.

And entering the land of Canaan, possessing the land of Canaan is the new covenant life. The giants are the giants of sin. Anger, murmuring, complaining, lusting after women, bitterness, grudges, unrighteousness, telling lies, all types of things, hating one's enemies, everything else.

Does it happen all together? No. Did they kill all the giants in one shot? No, it was little by little. There was a difference between the way the Lord destroyed the Egyptians.

The Egyptians were destroyed in one moment under the Red Sea. They were buried under the Red Sea. The Egyptians are a picture of the old man, buried in a moment, finished.

But when it comes to conquering Canaan, the lusts in the flesh, they are conquered. You conquer a particular giant, you get his territory. You conquer another giant, you get his territory.

If you allow him to live there, you never get his territory. That's the land of Canaan, and it's progressive. Once you have occupied the whole land of Canaan, we have become like Christ.

There's not a single lust in the flesh left. Everything has been conquered. So that will happen only when Christ comes again.

But the tragedy you read in the book of Judges is that the Israelites just allowed these Canaanites to live there, and that's exactly the condition of many believers, even those who claim to believe in victory over sin. So that is, to me, a picture of progressive occupation of the land of Canaan, and I see the land of Canaan as all the things in my flesh that dishonor God. And you know, it says in 2 Corinthians 7, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

One last verse to quote Paul's own testimony. He says in 1 Corinthians 4, I'm conscious of nothing against myself, but that doesn't mean I'm acquitted, because the Lord examines me. To paraphrase it in the language of the land of Canaan, what he says in 1 Corinthians 4, is all the giants I've seen, I have killed by the grace of God.

But there are areas of my life that are un-Christlike, which I haven't seen yet, that are giants I've not yet seen. I can't kill them until I see them. But when I see them, I'm going to have the same attitude to them that I had towards the ones I've already killed.

That's Galatians 5.24. Those who are Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. That means that is my permanent attitude to the flesh with its affections and lusts, but I can kill those lusts only when I see them. I can kill the giant which I see.

Until then, I can only say, I'm conscious of nothing against myself. We should live there. Most Christians don't even live there.

They don't even overcome conscious sin. They don't seek God for grace to overcome what they consciously know is wrong. And, but he says, but that doesn't mean I've occupied the whole land, 1 Corinthians 4.4. Because the Lord sees there's still, like he told Joshua in the book of Joshua, there remains yet much land to be possessed.

I hope that makes it a little clearer to you.

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