

Casting Off Self Confidence

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a heart eager to hear God's voice, like the woman who touched Jesus by faith and was healed. It encourages focusing on encountering Jesus and His word, avoiding gossip and distractions, and seeking a life of total dependence on God. The message highlights the need to be spiritually circumcised, cutting off confidence in oneself and having faith in God's provision and presence, as seen in Jesus' life and Paul's example of standing firm despite abandonment.

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Scripture: John 16:32, Hebrews 13:5, 2 Timothy 4:16, John 19:11, John 18:36, John 16:33

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Description

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Transcript

Where Jesus, before he went to the cross, he said these words to his disciples. Dear brothers and sisters, please pray that God will give you a word that will help you in the coming days and months and years. It is very easy to come here and get excited with meeting people and other things and not hear what God is saying to you.

The main reason why we come here for three days is to hear God. If you don't hear God speaking to you in these days, then you are wasting your time. More than just hearing me, you must hear what God has to say to you.

Everybody may hear me, but only a few may hear God. That depends on whether you have a heart that is eager to hear what God has to say. We read of a time when Jesus was walking down the road.

A great crowd was gathered around him. Something like this. Jesus is somewhere in the middle and so many people gathered around him.

Even today, the Lord is here, but we cannot see him. He is here. Around that road, even though so many people gathered around him, it was only one woman who touched him by faith.

She had a problem that no human being could solve for twelve years. She went to one person, one doctor, another doctor. It only became worse.

When she touched Jesus by faith, immediately the whole problem was solved. Do you have a problem that has not been solved for many years? You go to one meeting, another meeting, one preacher, one pastor, another. There is nothing solved.

I want to tell you that God can solve every problem. And if you come here, not just to meet good people, but to touch Jesus and hear his word. And you really concentrate on trying to meet the Lord in these three days.

Make sure you don't gossip about evil during these days with other people. Just for three days, stop all that. Say, Lord, I am not going to gossip these three days.

I am not going to talk about other people. I am not interested. I want to hear you.

I want to get in touch with you. These three days can change your life. Otherwise, like many other conferences, you can come and you can go and still be the same.

Be like that woman who came and touched Jesus by faith and she was changed. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Even if you have a physical problem or a sickness, the Lord can touch you.

He doesn't matter what the problem is. God can solve every problem. Here in John chapter 16, we read about one great secret of Jesus' life.

That's what I wanted to share with you because that's a secret we must also learn. This was just before he went to the cross. These were the last words that he spoke to the disciples after eating the last supper with them.

And he said, I know what's going to happen in a little while. I know what's going to happen in a little while. John chapter 16 verse 32.

You will scatter and leave me alone. That's what's happening right now. See, these were people, these disciples, who said we will forsake everything and follow you.

During those three and a half years, many others had left Jesus. Because they were offended with the truth that he spoke. Jesus would gather a great crowd with his healing and miracles.

And then he would drive them away with his preaching. He was a very unique preacher. He would gather thousands with his healing and miracles.

Then he would start preaching to them and most of them would go away. And it didn't disturb him. He would go to some other place again, thousands would come because of his healing and miracles.

Then he would preach the word of God and most of them would go away. So finally, he was left only with these twelve people and one of them was the devil and left also. And now he says, you eleven people will also go.

And then you will leave me alone. I know you love me very much but things are going to be quite difficult in a little while. See, it's easy to be with Jesus when things are smooth and easy.

When persecution and difficulty comes, then we get tested. Those days have already come in some parts of Northern India. Those days may come here also.

Where it won't be as easy to be a Christian as it is right now. It may not be so easy to be together like this. And many are going to be tested.

Will we follow Jesus only when things are easy or when things are difficult? Will we follow Jesus only when things are easy or when things are difficult? Jesus is our husband and we are his wife. Jesus is our husband and we are his wife. What would you think of a wife who is very happy to be with her husband when he is helping and making a lot of money? And what if he becomes sick and he is paralyzed and he can't go to work and there is no money in the house? Then she has to look after him.

Then things are difficult. Then she leaves him. A lot of Christians are like that.

They want to be turned to that right room when things are good. When he can do some things for them. When he can do some things for them.

He gives them a good house and a good job. God blesses them. When Jesus is with us and when we follow him.

He leaves us. Even if everyone leaves you, I won't leave you. Be careful because the one who said that was the first person to run away.

So don't be so sure that I will not forsake you at all. It's good because we have no confidence in ourselves. You know in the old testament to become a member of the nation of Israel.

You had to have a thing called circumcision. So if some other nation person came and wanted to become a member of the nation of Israel. It's okay you got to be circumcised.

Now we know that everything in the old testament had meaning. You know the man that was slain in Egypt was a picture of Jesus dying on the cross. And the children of Israel going through the Red Sea was a picture of water baptism.

And the cloud coming down from above was a picture of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And even the serpent lifted up on the cross was a picture of Jesus becoming sin for us on the cross. So everything in the old testament had a meaning.

Even the height priest was a picture of Jesus our height priest. And the temple was a picture of the church all of us meeting together. What was the meaning of circumcision? That was so important that the Lord said if you are not circumcised you cannot be part of my people.

See Genesis chapter 17. That is the place where the Lord instituted circumcision for the first time. And he said to Abraham verse 12.

Every male among you is 8 days old so be circumcised. Any foreigner and anyone who bought his money he's got to be circumcised. And verse 14 if a person is not willing to be circumcised he will be cut off from my people.

He has broken my covenant. So that's what God said. That was so important.

It was more important than even water baptism. Nobody in the bible is saying if you don't get baptized in water you can't belong to God's people. Many people have gone to heaven who didn't get baptized in water.

Who died in their last moment they accepted Christ on a sick bed or something. But in the old testament circumcision was more important than even baptism. What is the meaning of it? It's very important to understand.

Read Philippians chapter 3. The meaning of circumcision. Philippians chapter 3 verse 3. He says in verse 2. Beware of the false circumcision. The false circumcision is the people who are just circumcising their body.

He says in the new covenant you can't become a part of God's people just by that physical circumcision. But we are the true circumcision. Verse 3. And what is the mark of this circumcision? Just like in the old testament they cut off the pieces of flesh and threw it out.

How can you get a job if God paralyzes him and makes him sick? The bible says let not the rich man glory in his riches. Let not the clever man glory in his cleverness. The world is full of people who have confidence in their own ability, in their own wealth, in their own resources.

That is how every child of Adam is. But when we come to Christ. When we give our life to Christ.

We meet this true circumcision. We put away this confidence in our flesh which all the people of the world have. Lord I don't think of myself anymore as rich or clever or white or black or anything.

I see all these film stars daily glorying in their physical appearance. If something happens to their face and they lose their beauty, their job is done. But we don't have confidence in our beauty.

We have confidence in nothing that we are by ourselves. But we have confidence only in Jesus. He says we glory in our strength only in Jesus Christ and we don't have any glory in ourselves.

That is the mark of the people of God and the new covenant. So many of our problems come because we are not spiritually circumcised. I am absolutely confident that is the reason.

All your problems come because spiritually in your heart you are not circumcised. That means you have some confidence in yourself. Or you are depending on some other human being.

Maybe you are depending on your elder brother in your church. And you get disappointed when he cannot help you the way you think he should help you. If you are spiritually circumcised, Then when people help you, you are happy.

When they don't help you, you are still happy. And you have no complaint against anybody. Let me ask all of you sitting here.

Can you honestly say I have no complaint against any human being today? People have done so many things but I have no complaint against them. Don't answer that too quickly. Just think for a moment.

Think even during the last one week. Whether you had a complaint against somebody who did something or did not do something to help you. Why are you unhappy? Because you are not circumcised in your heart.

That is what the Lord has shown you. If you want to belong to my people, you must have no confidence in the place. Not in your own place.

And not in anybody else's place. You should not have confidence in anybody else's place. And if you develop that life, You will be ready to face the future.

That is what we read in John chapter 16. He says all of you are going to run away. You all go to your own home.

Because it is much safer inside the four walls of your own home. And you will not think of me. Who is living all by myself.

You will not think of me. Who has given up my home. I don't have a place to lay my head.

You all got a home to run to. I don't have a home. My brothers don't believe in me.

You know that can happen. A lot of believers we have seen sometimes. Good brothers and sisters in the church.

So helpful in so many things. I have seen that in Bangalore. You know in past years so many brothers were so active in helping during the conference time.

Something happened. And they got offended. And they left the church.

Not only left the church. Now they speak evil against us. We don't speak evil against them.

We say God bless them. But they curse us. They speak evil about us.

They forget all the hundreds of blessings they got when they were with us. I know people who came to our church so poor. We prayed with them.

We spiritually guided them, helped them. And they got good jobs. They learned the principles of God's kingdom.

And their children got blessed in the church. And then their children grew up. They all got good jobs.

And they left the church. They don't need the church anymore. Because they got everything they want.

It's like milking the cow completely. And now it's old and good for nothing. That's how they treat the church.

It's not because there's no more milk in the church. There's plenty there but they don't want it. But I have seen how it has gone with all these people spiritually.

All of them have gone down spiritually. Everyone. Why don't you just get across to them? They have gone down.

So that can happen. Why can't it happen? You have a church. Why are you going to do that? Are you going to complain about that? We have no confidence in the church.

I have decided that I shall always be an inwardly circumcised person. This physical circumcision once it's done it's permanent forever. But spiritually it's not like that.

I can give away all confidence in the flesh today. Be a whole hearted brother. And after 4 or 5 years and God has blessed me using me that flesh can grow again.

But I am not circumcised. And once again I become proud. And then God's grace departs from me.

I have seen it happen. You have to be careful. The great secret of Jesus' life here in verse 32.

He says you all leave me and you all go away. Why do you go up to them and say please don't go, don't leave me alone. You have done that.

Jesus says you all leave me and you all go away. Because he said see that last part of verse 32. I am not alone.

My father is with me. That was the secret of Jesus' life. He was very thankful for his son.

He was very thankful for his disciples. He was very thankful for many crowds of disciples. He was thankful for 70 disciples who went out to preach.

He was thankful for 12. But one of them left. He was thankful for the 11.

But the 11 also left. He said that's ok. I will never be alone.

Because there is one who will always be with me. That was the secret of Jesus' life. When he lived on earth as a man he had no confidence in himself.

He, Almighty God when he came to earth as a man he lived on earth as an inwardly circumcised person. He had no confidence in himself. That's why he often went not alone with God and prayed.

Why? Those who have a lot of confidence in themselves they don't need to pray. Why do you need to pray? I am quite capable. I will tell you that those of you who don't pray have a lot of confidence in yourselves.

I can tell you who all sitting here are not circumcised. Brothers and sisters those who don't need to pray those who say I can do everything without praying I can be a good wife, a good mother I don't need to pray. I have heard so much of the church I can bring up my children properly I don't need to pray.

Don't be like that dear sister. Get rid of this confidence in the flesh. I will tell you another mark of those who have not circumcised.

They are always talking always, usually about other people. There are so many opinions I think this about this person this about the other person this about this If you are elders in a church they need to know about everybody in that church. If you are an elder in a church definitely you need to have an opinion about every person in that church.

In the days when I was an elder in Bangalore, I had an opinion about every single brother and sister in that church. But if you are not an elder you don't need to have an opinion. Elder needs to have an opinion because he has to help them spiritually and he is answerable to God for all of them.

But if you are not an elder you are only answerable by your children. You must have an opinion about your children. Why do you have to be about all the other people when you are not an elder? Why do you have to be about all the other people when you are not an elder? Why do you have to be when you are not an

elder? I will tell you why.

Because you are not circumcised in your mind. You feel that your opinion is so important that everybody must hear it. You feel that your opinion is so important that everybody must hear it.

That's why you have not grown spiritually even after so many years. Your knowledge is increasing. Your head is becoming bigger.

Your body is not getting taller. You are like these children with a big head and small body. You are like these children with a big head and small body.

What about believers? You see that's not the way to grow. You cannot grow spiritually by getting a lot of knowledge from the Bible. You can grow spiritually if you cut off all confidence in your flesh.

If you have plenty of money the Bible says tell rich people not to depend on their riches. See 1 Timothy chapter 6 Well, there may not be many people here with plenty of money. But the principle applies in other areas also.

Listen to this. Listen to this. 1 Timothy 6.17 In this world, even if you have a lot of wealth you must trust God.

and therefore you can make a lot of money, then the word here is, first of all, don't be proud. Don't be proud that you're so clever and you've got so much money. God can paralyze you and make you sick and you won't be able to earn one rupee after that.

All your poverty and money, God can bring some court case against that and you can lose all your poverty and money also. Don't be proud. Don't depend on your ability and your cleverness and your intelligence.

That's the mark of an uncircumcised person. He's like that person Jesus said about us, sit back and relax. You've got enough to keep going for many years.

God said don't be like that. Depend on our abilities, our property and wealth and riches. God is an uncircumcised person.

What did we read in Genesis 17? Those who are uncircumcised are cut off from my people. Spiritually we are cut off from God. All these things.

But most of us here don't have so much money or such an education. So we are not rich in money but we are rich in our opinions about ourselves and other people. You may be earning 800 rupees a month but you can be so rich in your opinions about other people.

But you are not an expert. You have so many opinions. You are like a sister.

You have so many opinions. That's why you never get victory over your anger. You know I have discovered through the years.

Many people sitting in our church for 20 years and you never get victory over anger. You know why? You know why you haven't got victory over anger? Because you are always giving your opinion about other people. You just stop that from today.

Say Lord I'm going to fast. Once I told people in my church. I said can you stop giving your opinion about one week 7 days fast.

I'm not giving you your food but fast. Ask anyone. And every time I said can you open your mouth.

Tell your husband to remind you. I remember you are on fast for one week now. Or the husband opens his mouth wide.

Please remind him. You said you are on fast for one week. I'm expressing your opinion.

And I tell you, you will be so blessed during that one week that you don't want to do it for 52 weeks every year. You will be circumcised. Lord I have no confidence in my ability to judge other people.

Because I see only 1% of their life. Many of you have seen me for many years. How much do you know about me? I'll tell you.

1%. You don't know anything about my thought life. You don't know anything about how I handle money.

You don't know anything about how I sleep to my wife at home 365 days of the year. You don't know how I talk to my children. You don't know how I talk to my co-workers in Bangalore.

You have seen me standing up in the court every year. Then only 1%. How can you have an opinion about me? You may think I'm very spiritual but I may not be spiritual.

Look around at others also. How much do you know about them? You wives, you live with your husbands. Do you know whether he's got victory over dirty stocks in his mind? You don't know.

Do you know whether he's free from the love of money? You don't know. You may see him not running after money. That's ok.

Because you can see that on the outside. Loving money? How do you know whether he loves money or not? What I'm trying to say is all of us know only about 1% about the other person. Now what do you think of a judge in a high court? He's got a 100 page case.

And he reads the 1 page and passes the judgement. I said he's not meant to be a judge. There's 100 pages.

He had only 1 page and he passed the judgement. How does a judge in a high court does that? But believers, we are doing it all the time. Why? Because we have such confidence in our flesh that even if I read 1 page, I can pass the judgement.

I know only 1% about that person but I can pass the judgement. That is why you don't get victory over your anger. That's why you're not rejoicing all the time in your Christian life.

That's why you're not able to work on temptation. That's why you have so many problems. That's why you have so many sicknesses and financial problems.

So many other problems. That's why you have problems in your church with other people too. Now I'll give you one advice.

Be circumcised today. Can you explain what that means? I cut off all confidence in myself. I don't have any confidence in my ability to assess other people.

I could be wrong. Many years ago, I read a children's story. It's not a true story but it is a very beautiful story which I have never forgotten because you learn from that story not to judge other people.

It's a story of a poor father whose wife had died and he brought up this little girl all by himself. That girl was a teenage girl and she got a job to work as a servant in a very rich prince's house. She was there to help the princess in the king's palace.

She did her job very faithfully. And one day some very valuable diamond ring was missing from the prince's princess's bedroom. And she said, nobody has come to this room except my servant.

That was true. They asked this girl. She said, no I didn't take it.

I'm a Christian. My father taught me to be a Christian. I've never done a lie.

I said, no, you have done it. So they dismissed her and they sent this man and his daughter away from that country. The father asked the daughter, have you taken this ring? Tell me the truth.

She said, no daddy, I always tell you the truth. How did it disappear? He said, I don't know. So the poor man and his daughter had to go away without much help from anyone.

And the old man died. This girl grew up and found some job somewhere or the other. Many years later, in this palace, they were cutting down one big tree.

When they cut down the tree, there was a bird's nest there. And in that nest they found something shining. And that was the ring.

The bird had come through the window and taken that 15 years ago. Then the princess and the king felt so bad that they had judged this poor girl. They were searching for her.

They found the poor father and he died in sorrow. Have you ever judged people like that? No, it must be. Nobody else came to the room but you.

They have never thought of a bird. You and I are like that. We don't make allowance for the fact.

It may have been some other reason, not what I think of. But the person was circumcised. He has got a whole confidence in his own flesh.

He can obey his Jesus' command, which says I know only 1%. How can I judge? There may be some other reason that I don't know. So when we use confidence in ourselves, only then we can have confidence in God.

Do you know what confidence in God means? Faith. You know why we have so little faith? Because we have so much confidence in ourselves. These things are related.

You know it is like a seesaw, which these children sometimes sit and play. You have a lot of confidence in yourself, but you have very little faith. When the seesaw goes down, you have more confidence in yourself, and zero faith.

You bring up all your confidence in yourself, then the faith will grow and you will have a lot of faith. That was Jesus' secret of his life. He says you can all leave me.

I will not complain. I will not get angry with you Peter or John for running away. Because I have someone who is always with me.

He is the one I depend on all the time. So when we look at the future, what is going to come in India or Tamil Nadu. You know what is the great need? The great need is to have no confidence in ourselves.

Have total confidence that Jesus will never leave me, not for a second. See the promise of the Lord in Hebrews chapter 13. Hebrews 13 verse 5 and 6. Hebrews 13 verse 5 and 6. See it says be content with what you have.

If you got little, say thank you Lord. Don't get into debt. This is a bad habit that worldly people have.

I must buy this. Do you have the money for it? But I can borrow. Don't do it.

You will destroy yourself. I have also been, when I first got married 38 years ago, I was very poor. Because I left my job.

But I decided one thing. I will never buy what I don't have money for. When I got money, I would buy something.

But I don't have money to buy. I never even bought shirts for myself. In those days, if my collar got torn, my wife will remove the collar and turn it around the other way around.

I can use it for another period. What is the result? I am 66 years old today. I have never been in debt.

I have been very happy. When God gave me more, I used more. When he gave me little, I was content with little.

I am not telling you what I didn't practice myself. Some of you feel, oh I must buy this, I must buy that, I must buy new clothes. I never buy new shoes.

Do my old ones wore out? Why should we waste money? I am a very happy man. I have a big verse which says, be content with what you have. Like other people have more, I don't compare myself to them.

Why? Because the rest of that verse, because my Lord has told me, I will never leave you and I will never purse it. If you believe that, you don't compare yourself with other believers. You will never get into debt in your whole life.

If you are in debt today, my dear brother and sister, please get out of debt as soon as possible. You know the Old Testament word for debt, in the Hebrew language is a snake bite. Snake will bite you and eat you.

But debt is permanently biting you. Always the snake is holding on to you. Don't you want to get rid of that snake that is slinging on to you? Little by little by little, clear your debt.

And if you have a need, go to God and say, Lord, I have a need now. We have needs without children and so many things. In some emergency, maybe some hospitalization, some college admission, you have to borrow.

If you borrow, please do your best to return it as soon as possible. But He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake it. So we can boldly say, Verse 6 The Lord is my helper.

Not man. The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid.

What can any man do to you? You know, that's what Jesus' attitude was. My Father is my helper. I will not be afraid.

Okay, all the 11 disciples have run away. My Father is with me. He is my helper.

I will not be afraid. What can all these Roman soldiers and Pharisees all do to me tonight? They can only do what God permits them to do. This is a beautiful verse.

You must remember it. It says in Verse 6, we must boldly say this. What is the verse? The Lord is my helper.

I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me? You say that in Tamil now, all of us together. Say it.

The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me? Okay, we made one mistake.

It says here we must say that boldly. Not softly. Now we are going to say boldly.

We are going to say boldly. We are going to say boldly. What shall man do to me? I will not be afraid.

What shall man do to me? Say that all your life and you will have no problem. See, God, Jesus could say, all of you are leading me. My Father is my helper.

He is not going to leave me alone. He will never leave me alone. What shall man do to me? Only what my Father permits him.

See what experience Paul had. You know, Paul was a mighty man of God. So many thousands were saved from him everywhere.

So many churches were established. So many demons were cast out. So many people were healed.

So many scriptures he wrote. The greatest man of God in the century. How was it at the end of his life? This mighty man of God, he writes one last letter in 2 Timothy.

Just few days before he died. And how does he say? 2 Timothy 1.15 All those who are in Asia have turned away from me. All those who are in Asia have turned away from me.

This man was alone. But he was not alone. Jesus was with him.

God was his helper. They took him to court. And when he was standing in the court, all his disciples ran away.

Chapter 4 verse 16 When he went to the court, he said that my first defense, no one supported me but all deserted me. They got afraid that the court will catch them also. They were happy to stand with Paul when he was preaching and they were blessed by his ministry.

But when he went to court, they all ran away. But he said, verse 16, that did not be covered against them, let not God judge them for that. But the Lord stood with me.

Paul was standing there in the court. All the disciples left. Nobody around him, no one was with him.

The Lord was with him. And strengthened him. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

Verse 18, the Lord will deliver me. And he will bring me safely into his kingdom. Paul told Timothy.

1 Timothy chapter 6 Verse 13 Remember Jesus Christ who made a good confession before Pontius Pilate. Remember Jesus Christ who made a good confession before Pontius Pilate. And you keep the commandment until he appears again.

What was the confession Jesus made before Pontius Pilate? In John chapter 19 verse 11 In John chapter 19 verse 11 Jesus told Peter, I mean Pilate told Jesus the verse, Don't you know I have authority to crucify you? In verse 11 Jesus said, No, no, no, you don't have any authority over me. But if my father does not give you that permission, you cannot touch even a hair on my head. But if my father does not give you that permission, you cannot touch even a hair on my head.

That is the confession he made. In verse 36 of chapter 18 In verse 36 of chapter 18 My kingdom doesn't belong to this world. I won't fight.

And my servants will not fight. So that is the confession. You have no power over me.

Except what my father gives you. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? I want to save brothers and sisters.

Jesus said, In the world you will have tribulation. But be a good cheer. I have overcome the world.

And you may follow me. And give the same confession that I gave. May the Lord help us.

That's great. May our heads abound in prayer. Will you say, Lord please help me.

Little by little not to have any more confidence in my place. No confidence in my place. Total confidence only in you Lord Jesus.

Lord do a work in me these three days. In Jesus name. Amen.

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