

Faith Must be Coupled with Repentance

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the inseparable connection between repentance and faith, likening it to the necessity of two wires for electricity to flow. Repentance is defined as turning away from sin, with various biblical definitions provided. The ultimate definition of sin is falling short of the glory of God, seen in the life of Christ. Faith is portrayed as leaning helplessly upon God, trusting in His intense love and believing that He always works for our good.

Scripture: Acts 2:38, Mark 1:15, Romans 3:23, John 15:5, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:1, James 2:17, 1 John 1:9, Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Repentance and Faith", "Trusting in God's Love"

Description

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Transcript

What God has joined together let no man put asunder. Repentance and faith. We cannot be saved if we don't have both.

It's something like electricity. If you know anything about electricity, what happens at a switch? When you say you put on a switch, the fan runs and the light comes on. All that's happening at that switch is two wires touch each other.

That's all. Electricity is flowing through one and the moment it gets contact with the other, lights come on. You cannot have an electric wiring with just one wire.

Nowhere in the world. You need two wires and then when they touch, the switch comes on. So it's like that.

I see repentance and faith are like that. If you have only one, there's no life. Nothing works.

There's no life. But when repentance and faith touch, there's life and light. That's just an illustration and it's helped me to see how God has put certain things together in pairs and you know it's like a man and a

woman.

You can't have a baby without a man plus a woman. A man alone can't do it. A woman alone can't do it.

But it's a man plus a woman. In many things in life it is like that and it's the same with repentance and faith. We saw a little bit about repentance which is, let me just say one final word about repentance and that is what is the finest definition of sin? You know repentance is turning away from sin.

So until you know what sin is, you can't turn away from it. Repentance is turning away from sin. So you need to know what sin is.

I mean if you want to face the north and you know where south is, you can turn towards the north. Something like that. So there are many definitions of sin in scripture and one of them is in 1 John chapter 3 verse 4 which says sin is transgression of the law.

That means you go against God's command. That is sin. Something God told you to do and you went and told you not to do and you did it.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You do something which you went against the law.

Another definition of sin is the opposite of that in James 4 where the first one is you did what you are not supposed to do according to God's law. In James 4 17 it says you know what is the right thing to do and you don't do it. That's the opposite.

Here's something you don't do. There's something you did. So the two types of sins.

One is what you did which God told you not to do and the other is you don't do what God said you should do. So this is the two definitions of sin. But beyond all that the most perfect definition of sin is in Romans 3 and verse 23 where it says everybody has sinned and come short of the glory of God.

That's the complete definition of sin more than the other two. Coming short of the glory of God is sin and the glory of God is we read in John 1 14. It's defined there.

The glory of God is sort of a vague term. Some people think of it as light, brightness. No, no, no, no.

It's not all that. It's very down to earth and practical. John 1 14 it says the glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ in his life full of grace and truth.

So the glory of God is seen in Jesus Christ. John 1 14 and sin according to Romans 3 23 is coming short of the glory of God. So ultimately the finest definition of sin is anything that comes short of the life of Christ.

Anything I cannot do in fellowship with Christ is sin. I mean down to earth practical things like if you're sitting watching something on television and if Jesus is sitting there with you and you come to some program on television and Jesus says I can't sit and watch this anymore. You'd also get up and go or you turn the channel.

Can't watch that. A person who is serious about his Christian life, his attitude will be anything I cannot do in fellowship with Christ I don't want to do. It can be different things you know you in your office or something you sign a certain statement which may bring you financial loss because that's the truth.

So you modify it or you change it. What would Jesus would Jesus come to sign that as a witness? No. I say I want to be honest there.

That's happened to me many times it even happened to me a couple of weeks ago when I was to sign a statement I say that I want to say what's 100% true it will bring me financial loss fine it's okay. I'd rather lose money than lose fellowship with Jesus Christ. You take that attitude your life will grow spiritual life in leaps and bounds.

People will not be able to recognize you one year from now how much you've grown but if in your private life and nobody sees there are things you're doing where you know it's fishy questionable Christ would not go along with you in what you did or what you said. Well you're not going to make much progress in the Christian life. Anyone can make progress in the Christian life.

He says I'm I'm going to do only what I can do in fellowship with Christ and most of us you've heard the scripture so much in this church we know in many situations your conscience will tell you you cannot do that in fellowship with Jesus Christ. If Christ were right here you would not sign that statement because it's false even if you made a little money through it. There are a lot of Christians who do that.

They bend the law twist it a little bit make it mean what it doesn't mean. Jesus never did that. Can you convince Jesus about that and you know ultimately you have to give an account for that in the day of judgment don't forget that whatever you may do you may have escaped the notice of people on earth but one day in the day of judgment Lord bring it up.

Uprightness that's repentance is turning away from anything un-Christlike. I never forget a story I heard of a poor repairer of shoes who was a fine Christian in another country and he was not making shoes he was repairing shoes he was a poor man but he was an upright Christian and he used always the best material of leather or whatever it is or to repair shoes and he had an assistant as a little boy and that boy said to him said sir why don't you use some inferior material when you repair the shoes because then they'll come back to you again sooner because the shoe wears out because the metal material was inferior he thought he was giving a clever idea to his master and the master said no I'm a Christian and the day of judgment when I stand before the Lord there'll be a big pile of shoes next to the judgment seat and the Lord will pick up each one of them and say John why did you make this one like this with inferior material and what will I answer to the Lord in that day he says that's what concerns me more than can I make a little more money now people like that will have a glorious entry into the kingdom of heaven when Christ comes back well many other Christians at the judgment seat of Christ will hang their head in shame don't ever forget that every single thing we do and say you have to give an account in the day of judgment Jesus said that in Matthew 12 37 every idle careless word men speak every word they'll give an account in the day of judgment that's made me very very careful in my life in my early Christian life I was not very careful about that because people did not stress that in the messages I heard the church I went to tell you honestly the churches I went to never once did I hear a preacher tell me your words you'll give an account for every word in the day of judgment it's written in scripture in Matthew 12 but why is it nobody preaches that the only preach believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved I'm sorry I believe that for a long time and my life was just as defeated as in my unconverted days till I began to take the scripture seriously like Abraham said they've got the Bible let them read that they don't need a preacher to tell them they got the Bible they can read it and I often use this statement made this statement if you can read that means if you can read and write you're educated you can read and you have a Bible in your language and you don't read it you deserve to be deceived by preachers you deserve to be deceived by preachers because you

got a Bible and you know how to read you have no excuse I want to say that plainly repentance mostly coupled with faith faith is there many many expressions many things that faith in is involved and I can't complete it all in just a few minutes but first of all it's based on the fact that God loves me intensely that's the one thing that the devil tried to deceive Eve about look at that beautiful tree implying that's what was the devil was implying and he was clever enough to understand the devil's reasoning look at this beautiful tree it makes your mouth water isn't it such so wonderful why has God not allowed you to eat it I'll tell you Eve it's because he does not love you that seed once it was sown in her mind oh perhaps God doesn't love me and the devil even went further and said God knows that if you eat of it you'll become like him and he doesn't want you to become like him and the fool that Eve was she believed the lie of the devil but she's not the first one millions and millions of people since then even born-again Christians believe the lie of the devil that God doesn't love you he's always looking at you with anger I know in my early Christian life after being born again many times I felt the spiritual thing to do was to always believe that God was frowning at me you're not good enough and I thought that was a spiritual thing to do to imagine that God is happy with me oh that was carnal the spiritual thing was to always believe that God's frowning at me one day God gave me a dream now I don't believe all the dreams but I've got a few dreams in my life that God gave me and that really helped me in my Christian life and I'll tell you what that was I saw in my dream I was coming back from preaching at some big conference and I poured my heart out and worked hard and sought the part of the Holy Spirit and poured out my heart and I felt that I had done my best and as I came back I heard a voice behind me saying you could have done better than that oh but that must be the Holy Spirit challenging me you could have done better than that you could have never that and I felt discouraged I came back from the meeting happy because people had responded to the truth and I felt discouraged when I felt and I said to the Lord in my dream I said Lord whenever you speak to me face to face you always encourage me why is it when I hear you speaking from behind my back you discourage me like that it was not good enough I heard in my dream the Lord tell me turn around and see who's speaking and I turned around and it was the devil and he fled I learned something that day that I have never forgotten the Lord never tells us that was not good enough I never tell my children that I still have with me some birthday cards that my sons wrote to me when they were about three or four years old the spelling is all wrong the e is written the opposite way and all that why have I kept those cards with all the wrong spelling and I couldn't care less if the spelling is wrong it's an expression of their deep love for me they couldn't afford to go and buy a birthday gift for their dad they don't have any money but they picked up it wasn't even a regular card they're just some piece of paper that they picked up and and I tell you that's more precious than that \$10 card you're going to buy it buy from somewhere because it came from a loving heart and you know it's wonderful to know that our children love us and that's how it is with God loves us and it's good for children to know that we love them but I'll never go to my child and say hey what did you write for my birthday do you know that e is written crooked that's not the way to write e and that's not the way to write the D is that what I tell him when the child out of love comes and gives me a to the best of his ability tried to say happy birthday dad and if I won't do that as an evil father how in the world I will never say my son that's not good enough I'll never say that it came out of a loving heart and I say when I seek to do something for the Lord not perfect I know it's imperfect but to the best of my ability I try to do something for him he will never say to me that's not good enough that's making him out to be a more evil father than I am now I say that for your encouragement I'm sure many times you have heard the devil tell you pretending to be the voice of God that was not good enough what you did and you got discouraged and you can condemn yourself saying when will I ever meet up to God's standards I say brother sister is he's not looking for some standard he's looking for a heart that loves him will you understand that he's looking for a heart that loves him and if you love him he's accepted even though your

spelling is wrong and the letters are crooked and many other things are not right it's the heart that God sees faith is to believe in a God like that is that easy why should we believe the devil's lie God is love the Bible says is the most perfect expression of love that we can ever think of a million times better than your dad and mom or whoever else you think loved you that's how God's love is and you know I believe this with all my heart and many times I think of it also when Christ comes back and we see him face to face I believe that the thing that will make us miserable you think you'll be happy when you see Jesus yes we'll be happy also but there's something that will make us miserable is Lord I never knew you love me so much there'll be love radiating out from his heart and his face and you'll be overwhelmed that you doubted him so many times on earth that he loved you so much that will melt our heart I believe I'll weep when I see it he loved us so much I don't believe any of us have understood the intensity and immensity of God's love for us and that's why we don't have faith we doubt every little thing comes along and the devil says there that proves God doesn't love you or something else goes wrong there's another proof God doesn't love you he didn't answer that prayer so God doesn't love you he's always around me like he's told Eve God doesn't love you see what happened there that God doesn't love you I start believing those lies of the devil quite some time ago you know these are the things I wish when I was born again at the age of 19 I wish some preacher who was in touch with God had drilled these things into my head what repentance was what faith was boy I could have started making progress I could have started running the race much earlier than I did I had to wait 16 17 years after I was born again before I started running this race but one thing I decided then I said Lord what I missed in my life I can give to my spiritual children I can give to those who listen to me what I missed is you know just like all of you parents all of us parents want to give our children a better lot in life than we had ourselves when we were young right it's exactly the same I want to give to God's people more than what I had when I was born again that they will know from the beginning what repentance is and what faith is it's to believe that God loves me intensely and that he will always give to me whatever is the very best for me one day when we see him we'll realize how much he loves us I was challenged by that once in reading Revelation chapter 5 Revelation chapter 5 I've said this many times that in heaven they sing a new song we read verse 9 Revelation 5 9 this is the new song they sing in heaven and the word knew them means fresh fresh means something they never sang before new and what is it Oh Lord they're singing to the Lamb you are worthy because you died and you shed your blood to purchase us I say hey that's not a new song I've known it for 60 years I've known it even before I was born again he died and shed his blood that's not a new song and then the Lord opened my eyes one day to see that when you get into the realm of eternity and you become like Christ and you come into the purity of God's presence the truth the simple truth that Jesus died on the cross for a sinner like me and shed his blood it will be every day as if you're hearing it for the first time can you imagine a one who's never heard and was desperate that he's going to hell never heard about Christ and he knows that he's violated his conscience and sinned and gone he's on his way to hell and he hears this truth that you don't have to go to hell Jesus died for you shed his blood for you and the first time he hears it and believes it wow he says really that's how it will be every single day in heaven really wow he died for me you know when I saw that the new song the fresh song I said Lord I want a foretaste of heaven here on earth one of the areas where I want to have a foretaste of heaven is that whenever I sing or think of Jesus dying for me and saving me from sin I want it to be as if it's the first time I'm hearing it a criminal condemned to death hearing that you don't have to die prison doors are open and saying you can go free and I thought I was going to be hanged this morning and instead of getting hanged they come to the prison door and say you can go free what happened somebody else died for you really Wow that can't happen on earth because they don't allow another person to die for me but according to God's laws he does it and to be gripped by that and many many times when we sing the simple songs of what Christ dying for me brings tears to my

eyes God's answering my prayer I want it to be fresh I never want the simple truth of Christ died for my sins ever to be stale old news then I know a backsliding has begun for myself anyway anytime I can sing about it or talk about it and it is stale news for me oh I know I knew that my backsliding has begun I never want to backslide even this morning I was singing that song which you saw it here sometimes I'm not skilled to understand what God has willed what God has planned I only know at his right hand stands one who is my Savior you know that song and there's a line further down which says that he who lives to be my king once died to be my Savior I kept on singing it to myself this morning that he who lives to be my king once died to be my Savior that's how much God loves me that's why I have faith faith is not such a difficult thing to have when you believe God loves you intensely is it difficult to trust a father who sacrificed his life and done everything for your good when he tells you something says my son my girl let me tell you something would you doubt him even if it looks like some impossible thing he says don't worry my girl I'll do that for you don't worry my son I'll do that for you you trust your father why can't we trust God like that faith is really such a simple thing but it has to be based on recognition that God loves me that's the thing that God that the devil took out of his mind and that's the thing that he's always trying to take out of your mind that God's frowning at you he's always saying it's not good enough he's saying you'll never make it you haven't made it till now you'll never make it in the next 50 years I'm sorry to say I believed all those lies for years and years and years till it made my life miserable made me a backslider I got out of it I'll never get back into that rut and I'm determined to get every believer I meet out of that rut I don't want to be a great preacher I never want to be that I want to be one who helps people out of the pit they've fallen into I want to go on helping people out of the gutter most Christians are in a gutter with filth and sin and their married lives are like a gutter I want to get them out of it and it can only come when you say everything that God says is for your good it's difficult for children to believe when you're getting an injection for them or taking them through an essential surgery that that painful thing which the doctor is going to do is for your good very difficult for children to believe that we were grown-ups submit to a doctor's surgery because he said he's going to take the cancer out of my body so sometimes we go through a painful experience if you can trust a doctor can't you trust a heavenly father who takes you through some painful experience to deliver you from some cancer in your system which is worse than physical cancer I have faith I believe my Lord will only do what is good for me that's faith it's a leaning upon God another picture of faith that's helped me a lot is the branch that is in a tree that saying Jesus used the example of the vine because that is the most common thing there today we can use the example of apples or oranges or something like that let's say apples the branch that is in an apple tree it produces apples the trees the apples don't grow on the tree they grow on the branch but it grows on the branch not because of some ability in the branch zero the branch is in the tree and the sap that liquid from the tree flows into the branch that's what keeps the branch fresh that's what produces the apples and if you were to ask that branch if it could speak how do you produce these wonderful apples I don't know I just stay in the tree and the sap keeps flowing by some miracle the apples come out and that branch can never take if it's an honest branch it can never take credit for the apples it can't boast of another branch either of five apples hanging on my branch only three on yours that's a stupid branch as if it produces apples itself and those are the stupid believers who compare themselves with other believers and think I'm better than them I'm more spiritual than them I can do something better than them people admire me more than them these are the most stupid believers in the world they have not understood faith faith is leaning helplessly upon the tree and say I can do nothing what if that branch has been in that tree for 50 years you cut it off today not one apple will come on that branch from now on 50 years experience with God makes no difference today I've been a believer 60 years now but I'm as helpless today as that person was converted today he's a branch in Christ I'm a branch in Christ and to both of us Jesus says without me you can do nothing 60 year old

believer you can't do anything without me the newly converted believer you can't do anything without me that is faith Lord I'm helplessly dependent upon you that is the basis of prayer a lot of people don't know how to pray because they don't pray with faith you can pray for all night and get nothing Jesus always said when you pray believe have faith and many people have made under the devil's made faith such an you know mysterious thing that many people try to understand I hope you've understood a bit of what faith really means it means leaning helplessly upon God I'll give you my testimony every time I come to preach I say Lord I'm like the branch in the tree many times I don't know what to say but that's not the problem of the branch the branch doesn't have to produce one apple the branch has only got to stay in the tree the tree will produce the apples through the branch I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me without him I can do nothing faith is to say I can do nothing without Christ and I don't know whether all of you believe that because you feel there there are a lot of things you can do because you've got so much experience you know so much of the Bible you come to RLCF where you hear so many wonderful truths you know more than other Christians so of course you can do so many things no wonder your life remains shallow I want to encourage you my brother come down come down God's greatest blessings are on the lowest shelf remember that God's greatest blessings on the lowest shelf you're seeking for them up there those are all empty come down recognize that you're a nobody and you're a nothing people were to ask me brother what is your position in the body of Christ are you a teacher evangelist apostle prophet I say no I'm a voice so John the Baptist said he was the greatest prophet they asked him what are you said I'm a voice I'm a voice calling people to repent turn back to God get ready for the Lord's coming I'm doing the same thing just a voice saying get ready for the Lord's coming he's coming back again be ready get rid of sin that's all we are and God may give one gift to one another gift to another I believe that if you're a member of Christ's body he has given some gift to you which I cannot do I look at some things that some of you do here and I say I can't do that you have a gift I don't have and I have a gift that you don't have but we are members of one body so your gift is really I'm happy about it because I'm in the same body I mean no part of the body is jealous of another part no member is not jealous of another member of the body I say we're all one body there'll be no jealousy when you see the that you're a part of the body with others and all of us are helplessly dependent on the head and the head makes a picture of the head of the body of the bronze in the trees the same thing this hand can do nothing without being connected to the head you know when you say a man's hand is paralyzed what is paralysis the hand is still there the five fingers are there and all if you look inside the body I'm not a medical person but in a paralyzed man's body the nerves and the limbs and the veins and the arteries and the skin they're all there but the hand can do nothing there's only one thing missing it's connection with the head is broken that's all there are believers like that they look like members of the body but their connection with Christ is broken and so they are useless they hang around in the body they come to the meeting they do absolutely nothing for the Lord they sit in the chair on Sundays and warm the chair that's the only thing they do nothing and the other members of the body have to carry them you know like this paralyzed hand all the other members of the body had to carry this paralyzed hand for nourishment oh the hand this paralyzed hand is very eager to get the nourishment from the body all the food that's eaten must go to the hand also there are believers like that the only thing of receiving receiving receiving a paralyzed hand keeps on receiving nourishment if it didn't it would die it receives nourishment but what does it do for the body zero we're not to be believers like that would you like to have a paralyzed hand in your body you think the Lord wants a paralyzed hand in his body or a paralyzed leg dear brothers and sisters I want to challenge you will you say from today onwards I want to have faith that weak as I am I can do something for you I always use the example of the nail the nail is such a small thing but do you know when you feel scratchy it's only this little despised nail that helps that relieves you of that itching feeling it's not your nose or your eyes or your tongue you need

that you can be the smallest member in the body of Christ but you're useful you can scratch somebody's back you can say a word of encouragement to someone how difficult is it to say a word of encouragement to someone to say to somebody when you speak on the cell phone don't worry brother don't worry sister God will help you God will see you through that how long does it take to say that that can lift that person's spirit we criticize people enough why not once in a while say a word of encouragement to your wife to your husband weary under life's burdens struggling with children or struggling in their place of work to say don't worry my husband you'll be okay it'll be okay God will see us through but don't worry child is sick but God will see us through don't worry it can be such an encouragement and it takes a few seconds to say it and a person who's connected to the head will say it is not a great sermon but it is a great sermon to that discouraged person I want to encourage you to have faith lean upon God and say Lord I'm a helpless person but I want to lean upon you I I can't do the great things that those some of these great preachers do and great servants of God who bring hundreds of people to Christ I can't do all that but I can give one sentence encouragement to my husband to my wife to that brother who I see little discouraged to my children to lift their spirit I want to be someone who goes around lifting people's spirits the world is full of people depressing them let me not add to that let me not add to the gloomy faces in the world but me let me lift up people's spirits there's a story I've mentioned often which I never forget I never get tired of repeating like the man who who jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and committed suicide it's a true story and the police and others went and picked up the body and they found a note in his pocket and he they went to his room from there they found where he lived he lived in a single one-room apartment and he left a note on his table I'm going to commit suicide today at the Golden Gate Bridge but on my way there the long walk I have many miles that I'll be walking if one person smiles at me and looks at me cheerfully I will not commit suicide and he walked that long distance with so many people crossing him on those busy roads nobody cared even to look at him I'm not saying you should go around smiling at everybody you see on the road don't misunderstand me they'll think you're mad or something but I'm talking about being cheerful towards people you know to the people we know to lift their spirit it's so easy to do and it costs us nothing it doesn't cost us one cent faith is leaning upon God and with Christ I can do everything I want to encourage you we're going to have a baptism today and baptism is one of the first steps of obedience that the early believers took if you went to any believer in the in the days after Pentecost and said brother what is the first thing you did after you were born again I got baptized it's nowadays Christians are so backslidden they sit for years and years and years and years making Almighty God wait because they're deciding when they want to be baptized I thank God for every we thank God for this brother who's getting baptized today great example so that is the first thing what is the first thing you did after you got converted you ask anybody after the day of Pentecost all the same day I got baptized you know the 3,000 people got baptized on the very day they were converted that's how Christianity was in the early days today it's become so sluggish so sluggish but I rejoice with every time I see a baptism I praise God for this brother who's getting baptized was testifying that I have finished with my old life I'm not perfect I'm not perfect today after 60 years I was baptized in 1961 January that's more than 58 years ago but I'm not perfect but I decided something on that day when I got baptized I don't want to sin want to that's the important phrase I don't want to sin I've sinned many times since that but when I sin I repent come back to the Lord and it gets better and better and better and I sin less and less but I don't want to sin that's been true all these 58 years I don't want to sin and that's what this brother is testifying to I don't want to sin I want to please God I want to please God from now on so I don't expect a perfect person to come out of those waters today but a person who is saying testifying and I hope you can rejoice with him whenever you're whenever I see a baptism it reminds me of my own baptism and it'll remind you of your baptism that day you publicly testified and told the devil I don't belong to you anymore and publicly

testifying the angels watch rejoice from heaven when they see that and the demons are upset one more person out of my grasp now if you have not taken baptism obey him let this be a challenge to you today let's bow before God Heavenly Father we pray that your word will continue to challenge us long after we have heard it that the Holy Spirit will keep on reminding us of what we have heard we pray in Jesus' name Amen

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