

Following in Jesus Footsteps (Tamil)

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon encourages Christians to follow Jesus' example of humility and integrity, emphasizing the internal transformation offered by the new covenant.

Duration: 1:03:00

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the call to rise to a higher spiritual level in the new covenant established by Jesus Christ, surpassing even the great men of the Old Testament. It highlights the importance of humility, resisting temptation, and forgiving others as key aspects of following Jesus, rather than focusing solely on external miracles or achievements. The message underscores the significance of living a life where no circumstance can shake one's faith, rooted in deep humility, resistance to sin, and forgiveness towards others.

Transcript

After Jesus came, we can rise to a much greater height than all the Israelites in the Old Testament. But when we look around at most Christians, they don't seem to live at the level at which even some Old Testament people lived. Let me read a verse that David said in Psalm 16.

I would like to read a verse that the Psalmist said in Psalm 60. Psalm 16, verse 8. That is a tremendous statement. I will not be shaken.

Isn't it wonderful to live a life where no circumstance can shake us? Everywhere I go, I find Christians are easily shaken. Some fear, some danger, some sickness. Always there is something that seems to shake us.

Jesus spoke about a wise man who built a house that even a storm and a flood could not shake. And he spoke about another man whose house just fell down very easily. So we must be honest when we read these scriptures.

How is it in your own life? Are there things that happen in your home or in your office that shake you? Think that in the Old Testament, David could say, I will not be shaken. But we can rise even higher than that. We are living in a new covenant established by Jesus Christ.

For the last 40 years of my life, this is the message I have preached. That the new covenant is superior to the old covenant. So we can rise higher than David, higher than Moses, everyone.

Let me show you the book of Hebrews. In Hebrews chapter 11, we read about the great men in the Old Testament. And many of them did some amazing things for God.

But when you look at their life, almost all of them, what they did was something outside. And you read the Old Testament history, all the great things that they did was something outside the body. And you read the Old Testament history, all the great things that they did was something outside the body.

Great miracles, like Samson would tear a lion to pieces. Or Moses could split the Red Sea. Or Joshua could pull down the walls of Jericho.

And Abraham and Sarah, at the age of 100, they had a child. And these are some of the things listed here in Hebrews 11. But what many people don't realize is those are not written as an example for us.

But what many people don't realize is those are not written as an example for us. The Bible is not written to teach us how to kill lions and to split seas. So what is the purpose of Hebrews 11? Why is he saying Moses split the Red Sea? And why did Joshua pull down the walls of Jericho? And why did Samson kill lions? And why did Elijah raise the dead? One common thing about all these is it was all miracles done outside the body.

And then the last verse of Hebrews 11 says this. God has provided something better for us. You read this whole chapter of miracles and you can think, what can be greater than this? You read the Old Testament and you say, boy, I wish I could stop the sun in the sky for 24 hours.

But it says God has provided something better than that for us. Do you believe, do you really believe there is something better than stopping the sun for 24 hours? Or something better than splitting the Red Sea? And then what is this greater miracle that God can do for us? Something better. That's written in the next three or four verses.

In the chapter 11, it is talking about the faith of all the Old Testament people. In the first four verses of chapter 12, he is talking about the faith of Jesus Christ. You know, all these Old Testament people, none of them told others, follow me.

Moses, David, nobody said, follow me. Nobody could say it. Because even though they did many wonderful things outside the body, their life was not such that they could point to others and say, follow my example.

If you read from Genesis onwards in the Bible, the first person who said, follow me, was Jesus Christ. And in the Bible, the second person who said that was the Apostle Paul. Nobody in the Old Testament could say that.

Because they knew that their life was not something they could ask other people to follow. They could do miracles on the outside. But when Jesus came, he established a new covenant, which is far superior to the old covenant.

He could say, follow me. Because in Jesus, as a man, God was showing what he wanted to accomplish in us. See, external miracles, even the devil can do.

You read that right in the beginning of the Old Testament. That when Moses put his rod down to make it a snake, the magicians of Pharaoh also did the same thing. And even today, there are many people who do black magic and witchcraft, who do amazing miracles.

We read about fire coming from heaven. Not sent by God. In the book of Job chapter 1, we read Satan sent fire down from heaven on Job's property.

So, if you see fire from heaven, don't think it's always from God, it can be from the devil. There's tremendous power that Satan has. He could send a storm into the lake of Galilee to try and drown the boat in which Jesus was.

We know that was from the devil. Because Jesus rebuked the storm. If it was from God, he would not have rebuked it.

So, Satan has tremendous power. But there's something that Satan could not do in Jesus. And I want you to see in John chapter 14.

In verse 30. The ruler of this world, that's the devil, is coming to me. And for 33 and a half years, he has tried, but he could get nothing inside.

That was the miracle of Jesus' life. Jesus never split the Red Sea. He never pulled down any walls of Jericho.

He never tore lions to pieces. But he did something more than all these Old Testament people could do. He lived for 33 and a half years, and the devil could not come into any area in his life.

We're not called to be followers of Moses or Joshua. We're called to follow Jesus. Not in his ministry first, but in his life.

Many people, when they think of following Jesus, they immediately think of doing miracles. Many people, when they think of following Jesus, they immediately think of doing miracles. He healed the sick, let's heal the sick.

He healed blind eyes. But nobody can follow the ministry of Jesus. I'll tell you why.

Jesus prayed for people's healing. He never prayed for a blind man and said, oh sorry, you're not healed. Never.

It was always, 100%, there was a success. Even Paul did not have that. Paul had a thorn in his flesh, he prayed and prayed, he was never healed.

Paul had a co-worker called Timothy. We read in 1 Timothy 5, that Timothy had frequent stomach problems. And many other sicknesses.

And Paul could not heal them. Because that was not what Jesus primarily came to do for us. He came to bring us to this life.

Where we can say like him. The devil comes and he's got nothing in me. The devil's got no place in me.

If you can live a life where you can say, the devil has got no place in me. That's the best life you can ever live. Even if you're weak and sick and poor.

Even if you're weak and poor. You know, Paul faced some difficulties which people in the Old Testament never faced. Let me show you some of them.

In 2 Corinthians 11. He's comparing himself with other people who call themselves servants of Christ. Verse 23.

Yeah, please read it. He says, I am more a servant of Christ than all these people. Today, how do people boast that they are servants of Christ? They say, I have preached in so many countries.

I have preached to so many thousands of people. I have planted so many churches. I have so many co-workers who work with me.

I have raised so much money for God's work. I have preached to Prime Ministers and Presidents. These are the foolish, stupid things that servants of God boast about today.

I have healed so many people. Paul never spoke about that. He says, I am more a servant of Christ than others.

He did miracles. But he doesn't talk about it. He doesn't say, the handkerchief that touched my body cast out demons from me.

It happened, but that's not what he talks about. How is he more of a servant of Christ? Verse 23. He says, I have been imprisoned more than other people.

I have been beaten more than other people. I have been in danger of death more than other people. Five times, I got 39 lashes.

Verse 24. Three times, I was beaten with rods. I was stoned once.

Three times, I was shipwrecked. What was he going in a ship for? Was he going to do business to make money? No, he was going to preach the gospel. God allowed him to be shipwrecked.

One night and one day, he was out in the sea, swimming. I have been in so many journeys. For what? For preaching the gospel.

I have been in danger from rivers, from robbers, countrymen, from other gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, all types of dangers. I have worked hard, in hardship, through many sleepless nights. Why was he going through sleepless nights, and hunger and thirst? People do that for making money.

Paul was doing it for preaching the gospel. That is why he says, I am more a servant of Christ. Not one mention of how many countries he travelled, or how many sermons he preached, or how many sick people he healed.

He is talking about all the trials he went through. That is the proof that I am a servant of Christ. And he says the greatest thing of all, verse 28, and he says from all these external things, there is another thing that is weighing down upon my heart.

Many of us want to be servants of Jesus Christ. Don't follow all the great preachers of today. Many of you may like to be like them.

They are more like film stars who stand on the platform. And in the TV screens, and you like to be like them, I want to be like Paul, as he has written here. This is a true servant of Christ, who when his body was weak, was still going sleepless nights, travelling, travelling, travelling, to preach the gospel.

No matter how many people beat him, all kinds of false stories about him, he still went on preaching. It is very rare to find a servant of God like that today. Yet he was not boasting about his college education, or any such thing.

But he never boasted about his college education. He was not even boasting about how God has supplied all my financial needs. Paul never told anybody his needs.

He never asked anybody for money. He never sent one prayer letter as a report of his ministry. That's an amazing example.

I remember as a young Christian, I read that. And I read Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. I said, Lord, I want to do that.

I have never in my life sent a prayer letter asking for money. I am not the first person. Paul was the first person.

I said, Lord, I want to follow that. Jesus was like that. So what I am trying to say is, we have got so many wrong pictures of what it means to be a servant of Jesus Christ.

Our example is Jesus. And what are the areas where we can follow him? We cannot die for the sins of the world. Like he did.

We cannot all walk on the water like he did. We cannot all feed 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread. Those are not the areas where he told us to follow him.

Even Paul did not follow him. Paul could not walk on the water. He was swimming, we read here just now, 24 hours in the sea.

He could not walk. Those are not the miracles he did. So I want to show you the first area where we need to follow Jesus.

Philippians chapter 2. Here is a command from the Holy Spirit written through the same Apostle Paul who went through all this. He says, follow me as I follow Christ. In Philippians chapter 2, he says in verse 5, have the same attitude in yourself which was in Christ Jesus.

One verse. Think about that all your life. For me, that verse has been a guideline in my life.

I want to tell you something that even if you don't have a Bible, if you are one day locked up in a prison for the Gospel sake and you don't have a Bible, you can live with one verse for the rest of your life. One verse. Have the same attitude in yourself that Jesus had.

You say, can I have that? Without the Holy Spirit, impossible. You know, I am greatly excited by one thing. That the same Holy Spirit who dwelt in Jesus as a man has come to dwell in me.

It's not another spirit. The same Holy Spirit that helped Jesus to live on earth is in me and He can help me. If I yield to Him like Jesus yielded to the Holy Spirit.

And so we read here the first thing mentioned here about having the same attitude. He did not, verse 6, regard equality with God as something to be grasped but emptied himself and humbled himself. You know, when many people think about following Jesus, they immediately jump to what he was when he was 30 years old.

Oh, when he was 30, he did miracles, he did this, that. But let's start with the beginning. For 30 years, he never did any miracles.

What is the first thing he did? You know, just like when children go to school, they don't teach them science and geography and all. First they teach them ABC. So what is the first thing that Jesus did? Before he even preached.

He humbled himself. Though he was God, though he was God, he humbled himself and became a man. I remember an illustration somebody used to show this.

A man was trying to teach his little child how Jesus became a man like us. So he showed his child all the little fish swimming inside this aquarium in the house. He said, you see all these little fish inside? Sometimes they fight with one another.

Now, do you love these fish enough to go and become a fish and stay inside this aquarium? It's one thing to stand outside and observe and see how nice they are. You can say you love them. How much? Do you love them enough to go and become a little fish inside? And to allow all the other fish to bite you and hurt you and kill you? And the little child said, no, I don't want to go inside there.

And he said, that is what Jesus did when he came to this earth. We don't realize what a tremendous step it is to come down to earth. You know, the height from God to man is so great.

It's difficult to understand how much he loved us. And because he loved us, he humbled himself. When he came to earth, he became a servant.

When he came to earth, he became a servant. First step was coming to earth as a man. Then second, it says in verse 7, he went down further and he became a servant.

If he had come and become a king, even that would have been a humility. But he became a servant. That's the second step.

Then as a servant, he humbled himself further, verse 8, and became crucified as a criminal. So this is the first thing we learn from Jesus. He humbled himself, became a man.

And he humbled himself, became a servant and he humbled himself and allowed other people to treat him like a criminal. So I call this the three secrets of the Christian life. Number one, humility.

Number two, humility. Number three, humility. If you have learned that, you have learned the greatest secret in the Christian life.

In every situation, to go down and humble yourself. That is what it says here. Have the same attitude that Jesus had.

The greatest man of God on earth today is not the greatest preacher. I don't know who it is, but whoever is the humblest man on the earth, that is the greatest man of God. You know, when Moses lived on earth, he

was the greatest man of God on earth, without a doubt.

But we realize Read in Numbers chapter 12 and verse 3. Numbers chapter 12 and verse 3. What a testimony that the Holy Spirit can give about a man. What do you want to be known as? The greatest preacher on earth. The greatest Bible teacher on earth.

The greatest miracle worker. The richest person on earth. Me or some of you ladies, the most beautiful person on earth.

Is that what you are looking for? Tell me honestly. How many of you really have a longing that the Holy Spirit will give you a certificate that you are the humblest person on the whole earth? How many of you really have a longing that the Holy Spirit will give you a certificate that you are the humblest person on the whole earth? In Moses time, the Holy Spirit gave that certificate. The Holy Spirit gave him that certificate.

When Jesus was on earth, he was the humblest man on earth. There were many devil servants who were doing miracles. The devil can do miracles.

The devil can make people speak in tongues. One thing the devil cannot do, he cannot make a person humble. That is impossible.

That is the exact opposite of his nature. You know how the devil became the devil. He was a chief angel at one time.

He said, I want to go up, I want to be like God. That is how sin came through pride. Whenever you have a desire that I want to exalt myself over other people, that is the spirit of Satan.

Be careful. It is all over in many churches. When you want to show you are better than somebody else, when you want to show you can sing better than somebody, or preach better than somebody, or organize something better than somebody, and you want a name for yourself, or when your children go to school, you have a longing that people will see your children are better than other people's children.

That is the spirit of Satan. Then, when the devil comes, he has got something in you. Jesus said when Satan comes, he has got nothing in me.

So, I have learned the secret how the devil became the devil by seeking to exalt himself over others, and I see that in Christians everywhere. I see that in unbelievers, I see that in nominal Christians, I see that in born again Christians who are baptized as babies, I have seen it in believers who are baptized as adults, I have seen it in believers who claim to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. The desire to be above others to show that I am better, I can preach better, sing better, my church is bigger than other people's churches.

The whole aim is to get people to admire me. That is 100% the spirit of Satan. Jesus did the opposite.

The devil wanted to go up, Jesus decided to come down. Became a man, became a servant, treated like a criminal. So, there are two spirits operating in the world today.

One is trying to go up. You see that in the world. All politicians want to go up and up and up.

All political parties want to go up and up and up. All businessmen want to become bigger, bigger, richer, richer, richer. Then there is the spirit of Christ that is always seeking to go down.

To go down and wash people's feet. Take the low place. Who is the greatest man of God in this hall today? If the Holy Spirit can see, whoever has the greatest desire to go down and be a servant of others.

That is the greatest man or woman of God sitting here today. Don't be deceived by the praise of men. Men don't even know 5% of your life.

Tell me, those of you who have known me for many years. How much do you know of my life? Do you know how I speak to my wife at home? Do you know whether I get angry with her? You don't know. Do you know how I handle money at home privately? Do you know how I treat beggars? Or how I talk to an auto rickshaw driver when he wants more money? You don't know anything about my life.

You see me standing up here and preaching. Do you think I am a great man of God? Don't be deceived. I am not deceived.

I say, Lord, the value of my life is what I am in private. And that only God knows. His opinion alone about you is important.

For many years I have said this. All the opinions that people have about you, take it and throw it in the rubbish bin. Don't give any value to it.

Good opinions or bad opinions. Whether people call me a devil or call me a prophet, both in the rubbish bin. Only God's opinion matters.

You know, in the world, Christians, among Christians, we divide ourselves in so many different ways. We say Catholics and Protestants and Child Baptism, Believers Baptism and those who don't believe in speaking in tongues, those who believe in speaking in tongues. But God doesn't divide like that.

He says, humble and proud. What are you? You know. You know.

That is the reason why we are shaken. See what Paul said. Romans chapter 8. And verse 31.

Can anybody stand against me if God is on my side? Many of you, I know, it's so difficult life in Dubai for some of you poorer brothers. We have so many difficulties. Especially those who have to live in the camps and all.

It's so difficult. Imagine, if God was with you in that camp. What a difference it will make.

If almighty God is with you. You don't have money. Your employer is giving you problems with your visa.

Yes. He's taken your passport. Not paying you properly.

Many other problems. Your family is back in India who are suffering in need. Waiting for you to send some money and you have so little.

And many, many other problems. But on the other side, if you can say, God is with me. Who can be against you? Is your employer greater than almighty God? It's a wonderful thing to know this God as your father.

Jesus Christ came to make God your father. Nobody in the Old Testament could look up and say, Daddy. No.

But now we can. We can look up to the God who created this universe and call him my father. That's why Paul said, if God be for me, who can be against me? That's why he could face any situation.

And I want to tell you, dear brothers, dear sisters. Some of you may have a very comfortable life in Dubai. But don't be happy with all that.

You may have made a lot of money. You may be getting a good salary. Don't be satisfied with that.

When you stand before the Lord, what is it that will have value? Not how much you earn. How much did you keep your life free from sin? Very important. Did you keep your heart free from sin? That's the second thing we see in Jesus' life.

First, he humbled himself. And the second, for 33 years, we read in Hebrews 4, verse 15, he was tempted like us, but he never sinned. That is the example I want to follow.

Jesus was tempted like me. He never sinned. He was treated so badly by people, but he forgave them.

He was always forgiving people. Somebody called him Beelzebul, prince of devils. You read that in Matthew 12, forgiven.

And they killed him on the cross. Father, forgive them. That was the way of Jesus.

Before you want to do great miracles for Jesus, let me suggest to you something easier. Forgive others. I want to ask all of you sitting here one question.

Is there anybody on earth whom you have not forgiven? That is what we need to follow Jesus in. Don't look for doing miracles. First of all, learn to forgive others.

Let us learn ABC before we go to science and mathematics. Jesus said in Matthew 6, in verse 15, One question I have. If your sins are not forgiven, can you go to heaven? Yes or no? If your sins are not forgiven, you cannot go to heaven.

Another question. Can your sins be forgiven after you die? The Roman Catholics say that. Somebody can pray and give some money to the priest, God will forgive you.

I love Roman Catholics but I don't agree with their teaching. Supposing you die tonight and you have not forgiven somebody, there are quite likely some of you sitting here who have not forgiven somebody. Maybe you have not forgiven your mother-in-law for all that she did to you.

Yeah, quite likely some of you are like that. Or some brother or sister who cheated you of the property. Or somebody who did some harm to you in the office.

Or some elder brother in church, some pastor disciplined you. Or somebody told some false story about you or your children. Some spread a scandal about your daughter.

Have you forgiven them? I'll tell you something. Jesus said, if you don't forgive men their transgressions, your father will not forgive you. And, supposing you go away and you die tonight, where will you go? Even though you have attended this church for 20 years, where will you go? Maybe you are an elder in this church.

God doesn't care for that. Have you forgiven everyone? We are not called to split open red seas or to tear lions to pieces. We are called to something much easier.

Forgive those who hurt you. Why? Because you hurt God much more and He forgave you. The Lord said, I have forgiven you so much.

I have forgiven you 100 million dirhams. I am asking you to forgive one thing there. Very important.

What does it mean to follow Jesus? In the Old Testament there was no law like this. You read the whole Old Testament. Nowhere does it say, if you don't forgive others God won't forgive you.

Less was given to them in the Old Testament so less was required from them. You know like kindergarten examinations are easy. So there were Old Testament people who were like kindergarten.

But now we are Christians. God has given us more. He has shown us how Jesus forgave us.

He has shown how Jesus humbled Himself. He has shown how Jesus stood against temptation and did not sin. Let's seek to follow Him there.

I just said three things. To follow Jesus in humbling ourselves. To follow our Jesus in resisting temptation.

To forgive others. If you do these three I'll tell you one thing. Even if you never do a miracle in your life you never preach a sermon you never go as a missionary you'll have an abundant entrance into God's kingdom.

One last word I want to say to those who have a lot of money. Not all of you. I know some of you are very very poor.

But to those whom God has given a lot of money It says in 1 Timothy 6 Verse 17 And 18 And 19 Some very clear instructions the Holy Spirit has given to rich believers. If you are in that category meditate on those verses. And I'll tell you one way in which God will bless you.

Turn to Psalm 41 Psalm 41 And I want you to read verses 1, 2 and 3. I love verse 3. In the hospitals the nurses come and make your bed. But here it says the Lord will make my bed when I'm sick. If verse 1 I think of those who are helpless in this world.

The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble. And the Lord will protect him. He will be called blessed on the earth.

Verse 2 He will not give me over to the desire of my enemies. I have been a believer for 55 years. 50 years ago God called me to leave my job to serve him.

I can prove those verses in my life. God has made my bed when I'm sick. And he has blessed me in numerous ways.

Not with money. But something million times better than that. I want to say to all of you God can bless you amazingly.

Let's trust him. Let's humble ourselves. Hate sin.

And forgive everybody. God bless you. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. And while our heads are bowed in prayer I want you to think for a minute. Right now.

Is there anybody you have not forgiven? Think. Right now. Maybe your husband.

Maybe he cheated on you. Your wife. Some relative.

Some neighbor. Some boss in the office. Somebody whom you have not forgiven.

Maybe your parents. I want to command you in the name of Jesus Christ. Forgive them now.

Say to the Lord. Lord I forgive this person. And I forgive that person.

And if there is anybody else I have to forgive remind me. I stand before you now Lord and say I forgive everyone. And when I see them again I shall love them.

I shall love those people who hurt me. Give me the power of your Holy Spirit. I want to tell you my brothers and sisters those of you who have done that right now you will see the blessing of God upon your life.

Heavenly Father I pray that your Holy Spirit will move in every heart here. Bring a change in people's lives. And pour out your Spirit upon them.

Help them to be overcomers. We pray in Jesus name. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more.

Amen.

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