

(Gaining God's Approval) 1. Called, Chosen and Faithful

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the distinction between being accepted by God and being approved through faithfulness and testing.

Scripture: Judges 7:1, Luke 21:34, John 2:23, 1 Corinthians 7:29, Colossians 3:2, 1 Timothy 1:12, 2 Timothy 2:4, 2 Timothy 2:15, Revelation 17:14

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Gods Approval"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the distinction between being accepted by God and being approved by God, emphasizing the importance of being faithful over just being called or chosen. He highlights the example of the overcomers in the book of Revelation who have been tested and approved by God. Using the stories of Gideon's army and Jesus' caution against being weighed down by worldly cares, Zac Poonen stresses the need for believers to be tested in daily life and to maintain undistracted devotion to the Lord. He urges Christians to be like Paul and Timothy, diligently seeking God's approval through faithfulness and surrender.

Transcript

It is one thing to be accepted by God; it is quite another thing to be APPROVED by God.

The Faithful Remnant

The book of Revelation speaks of the triumph of the Lamb of God. But we are told that the Lamb has an army of disciples through whom He fights His battles and overcomes. These disciples are called, chosen and faithful.

"The Lamb is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."(Rev.17:14).

Many are called, few are chosen, but fewer still are faithful. These are the overcomers spoken of ten times in the book of Revelation. They are disciples of Jesus who have not only been accepted by God but who have been tested by Him through many circumstances and who have been approved by Him.

There were many who believed in Jesus when He was on earth, but He did not commit Himself to all of them.

"When Jesus was in Jerusalem.....many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men." (Jn.2:23,24).

Jesus knew that the vast majority of those who believed in Him still sought their own and came to Him only for personal blessings. Their sins had been forgiven but they did not desire to be overcomers. To be an overcomer one must long to be free from seeking one's own.

When Gideon gathered an army to fight the enemies of Israel, he had 32,000 men with him. But God knew that they were not all wholehearted. And so God whittled them down. The fearful were sent home first. But 10,000 still remained. These were then taken down to the river and tested. Only 300 passed the test and were approved by God (Judg.7:1-8).

The way those 10,000 people drank water from the river to alleviate their thirst was the means God used to determine who qualified to be in Gideon's army. Little did they realise that they were being tested. 9700 of them forgot all about the enemy while kneeling down to satisfy their thirst. Only 300 of them remained on their feet, alert, drinking the water with cupped hands.

Tested in Daily Life

It is in the ordinary things of life that God tests us - in our attitude to money, pleasure, earthly honour and comfort etc., Like Gideon's army, we too don't often realise that God is testing us.

Jesus warned us not to be weighed down with the cares of this world. He said, "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap."(Lk.21:34).

Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians saying, "From now on both those who have wives should be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.....I say this to secure your undistracted devotion to the Lord."(1 Cor.7:29-35).

We must not allow anything of this world to distract us from total devotion to the Lord. The legitimate things of the world are a greater snare than the sinful things - because the legitimate things look so innocent and harmless !!

We can alleviate our thirst - but we must cup our hands and drink just the bare minimum necessary. Our mind is to be set on the things above and not on things of earth. We have to forsake all if we are to be disciples of Jesus.

Like a rubber-band that is stretched, our mind can attend to the things of earth that are necessary. But once those things have been attended to, like the rubber-band springing back to its normal position, when released from its tension, our minds too should spring back to the things of the Lord and of eternity. This is what it means to have our mind "set on things above and not on the things that are on earth." (Col.3:2).

With many believers, however, the rubber-band works the other way. Their minds are stretched now and then to think about eternal things and when released, come back to their normal mode of being occupied with the things of this world!

Approved By God

Paul exhorted Timothy saying, "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4). Paul was not telling Timothy there how to be saved but how he could be an effective soldier of Christ.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God", Paul told him. (2 Tim. 2:15). Timothy had already been accepted by God. He now needed to be diligent to gain God's approval.

Paul himself had been placed in the Christian ministry by Christ because he had gained God's approval.

He says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service." (1 Tim. 1:12)

Paul was among the called, chosen AND FAITHFUL - and he longed that Timothy should be in that number too.

But Paul had been tested before he was approved.

We are being tested too.

God never commits Himself to anyone before testing him.

The accounts given us in the Scriptures of the testing of various men - some of whom were approved and some of whom were rejected - can therefore be of great value to us, for they have been written for our instruction.

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