

Glorifying God By Believing His Promises

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in doing the work of God, highlighting the need to trust in God's promises and believe in Jesus Christ as the greatest work one can do. It discusses the mistakes of Abraham as examples of how God can work through imperfect individuals who trust in Him. The message encourages believers to give glory to God by being strong in faith, trusting in His ability to fulfill His promises, and honoring Him through obedience rather than sacrifices.

Duration: 53:02

Scripture: John 6:27, John 6:29, 1 Samuel 15:22, 1 Samuel 16:7, Romans 4:20, Matthew 9:28, John 15:5, Romans 6:14

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Trusting God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

Among Christians, a lot of people have a wrong understanding of how we can do the work of God. You know, when we are grateful to God for what He has done, we say, Lord, I want to do something for you. Just like if some human being has done some very good work for us, we want to do something for him.

But God is not like man. And so many people who try to do something for God, they are doing dead works which God cannot accept. So we must read the scriptures to see what is the work that we have to do, we can do for God.

So here is an answer. John chapter 6, in the words of Jesus himself. You know, the Lord told the people there.

John 6, 27. Don't work for the food which perishes. But for the food which endures to eternal life.

Then they asked him a question. This is the question we ask. This is what we also ask.

What shall we do that we may work the works of God? A lot of people do want to do the works of God. What does God want us to do? Does he want us to walk on the water? Feed the 5000? Heal the sick,

raise the dead? Cleanse the lepers? Go to Afghanistan to preach the gospel? No. Verse 29.

It's very simple. This is the work of God that you believe in whom he has sent. Do you know that the greatest work you can do for God? To believe in Jesus Christ.

And believe doesn't mean a head faith. James says in his chapter 2 that head faith even the devils have. That is not what he wants.

What is the difference between head faith and heart faith? Head faith is just saying I trust you. Heart faith means I trust you so much I can commit myself to you completely. It's something like at a wedding when a woman gives herself to a man at the wedding.

And making a promise I will be married to you. That is a different type of faith. You are committing your whole life for the future to one person.

And that is what your sisters did when you got married. And sometimes you did not even know the man very well. You did not know much about him.

But you still got married and marriage was arranged and you committed yourself to him. Why should we hesitate to commit ourselves to Jesus like that who is absolutely trustworthy? That is the greatest work that you can do. So what we learn in the New Testament is that faith is the way by which we honor God.

It's not by going to North India as a missionary. If God calls you to do that you must do that. I would never have left my job in the Navy if God didn't call me.

I tell people don't ever leave your job unless God clearly calls you. Otherwise you will not be doing the work of God you will be doing your own work. You know there are some mothers they say I have dedicated my child to be a missionary.

You can't do that. Because that is telling God what you should do with your child. We must say I dedicate my child to do your will whatever it is Lord.

If you want him to be a lecturer in some college that is what he should be. So faith is committing yourself to do whatever God tells you to do. To obey is better than sacrifice.

Sometimes we think if I sacrifice a lot God will be happy with me. No. For example suppose you get up every morning at 5 o'clock to read the Bible.

And you fast and pray. But you can't control your tongue you get angry with your wife or husband. I say you stop reading the Bible stop fasting and praying and ask God to help you to control your tongue.

God is not interested in all those sacrifices if you don't obey his word. It's much more important to obey than to make any type of sacrifice. That is the verse all of you must know in 1 Samuel 15.

And verse 22. Samuel said to Saul. You know Samuel had told Saul God had said go and kill all the enemies of Israel the Amalekites.

Verse 3. Go and strike Amalek and destroy all that he has and don't spare anything. Put to death man, woman, child, infant, sheep, camel, donkey everyone. Now I want to tell you why God did such a thing.

Sometimes we think God is so hard to kill all these people. We read in the book of Leviticus. That all these people who lived in Canaan were worshipping demons.

And they and their families were all involved in demon worship. And demon worship had penetrated the whole family all across the land. And in those days the Israelites did not have the Holy Spirit or Jesus Christ living in them.

And those demons were very powerful. And if the Israelites had gone and stayed there without removing those other people. The demon possessed people would have gradually infiltrated and made the whole of Israel demon possessed.

Now today we don't have that problem. Because Jesus defeated Satan on the cross. So if a demon possessed person comes into the church, we don't have to kill him, we cast out the demon.

Those who don't have the power to cast out demons, they have to throw the man himself out. There was one preacher like that. One demon possessed person started troubling in the meeting.

He said, I don't know how to cast out demons. But if I cast you out of the hall, the demon will also go. That is the old testament method.

Get rid of the man and thus you get rid of the demon. But that's not how Jesus and the apostles did it. They cast out the demon.

But in the old testament, nobody could cast out a demon because Satan was not defeated. That's why the only way you could protect Israel was by killing all those people. There was no other way.

So to preserve the nation so that Jesus could come through Israel, God had to eliminate all those other people. But sometimes when God commands something, many human beings use their own wisdom. So what did Saul do? He obeyed God's commandment 95%.

But verse 8, he did not kill the king. He spared him. And the best sheep and oxen, verse 9, the fatlings and lambs, he did not kill.

Because that was all good. He thought this is all good, why should we kill this? He was using his wisdom. And Samuel came later.

And he said to Samuel, yeah, I have obeyed the Lord, verse 13. But Samuel said, then how is it I hear the bleating of the sheep, verse 14 here. Oh, then Saul made a silly excuse saying, we brought that to sacrifice to the Lord.

He says, didn't I tell you that the Lord told you to destroy everything? Didn't I tell you that the Lord told you to destroy everything? Once upon a time, when you were small in sight, you did everything that the Lord told you to do. But now you have become big in sight, what do you want to do? Remember this verse in verse 17. When you were small in sight, Can you think of the first day you came to the church? You were nobody.

You were little in your own eyes. But after many years, God blesses you and you become respected and honored by others. Then we become big in our own eyes.

Then we think, yeah, I can change God's word little bit here and there. That is what Saul did. That's how he lost the kingdom.

Never do that. When you read something in God's word, do it exactly like that. Don't change it.

People change only when they become big in their own eyes. And then when he said, I've come to make all this a sacrifice to the Lord. That is the time that Samuel said to Saul.

Verse 22 Do you think the Lord has delight in sacrifices as much as in obeying his voice? No, to obey is better than sacrifice. Verse 23 Because you have rejected the Lord, the Lord has rejected you. When you reject the word of God, God rejects you.

We reject the word of God when we become big in our own eyes. So remember, it's not all the sacrifice you make that God is looking at. Here is another very important Old Testament verse that you must remember.

We already saw, those who honor me, I will honor, says the Lord. Here is another one. To obey is better than sacrifice.

There are three very important verses in 1 Samuel that you must always remember. Please remember it, underline it, never forget it. One I already showed you.

Those who honor me, I will honor. 1 Samuel 2.30 Here is a second important verse. 1 Samuel 15.22 1 Samuel 15.22 To obey is better than any sacrifice you can make.

And the third important verse is 1 Samuel 16.7 The last part. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. These are three very important verses that will help all of us.

These are words from the Lord. Those who honor me, I will honor. To obey is better than sacrifice.

And man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. If you remember these verses, keep them always in your mind, you will be protected from a lot of wrong steps. So what did Jesus say? The greatest work you can do for God is to believe.

Now in the New Testament, very often Abraham is taken as an example of a man who believed God in the Old Testament. Do you know that Abraham made many mistakes? So God has not taken a perfect example and said, here is a man who has never made a mistake. There is a man in the Old Testament about whom nothing wrong is written.

And that is Joseph. We read in the Genesis, there is nothing wrong that we have seen in his life. But you don't read much about Joseph in the New Testament.

He was a good example for young people in the matter of sexual purity. But when it comes to faith, God doesn't lift up Joseph, he lifts up Abraham. Romans 4, James 2, Hebrews 11, Abraham.

But there, as you look at Abraham's life, there were mistakes that he made in his life. That is an encouragement to us. We also have made many mistakes.

I remember when my children left home, I told them, see I want to tell you something, I was not a perfect father. I want you to remember that. You did not have a perfect father.

But you had an honest father. That means where I made a mistake, I told you, I am sorry, I made a mistake. So, one day when you get married, I told them, don't get discouraged if you are not perfect.

You will not be a perfect husband, you will not be a perfect father. There is no perfect husband or father in the world. And God does not expect that.

In the front of our pulpit in CFC, we have a verse which says, let us press on to perfection. And that is to tell everybody, I who am preaching here, I am not perfect, I am pressing on to perfection. So, everybody who stands behind that pulpit is admitting, I am not perfect, but I am pressing on to perfection.

So, don't be discouraged if you are not a perfect mother or a perfect wife or husband. But you can be an honest wife, honest mother, honest husband, honest father. What does that mean? You made a mistake.

That is my mistake. If you can be like that, you can press on to perfection. So, it is wonderful that God has given the example of a man who made mistakes as an encouragement for us.

See, I will show you one example. In Genesis chapter 12, when the Lord told Abraham, Go to Canaan. And he obeyed.

But not immediately. He first listened to his father, and went halfway to Canaan and stopped. It says here that they went, they travelled up to a place called Haran.

Genesis 11, 31. Terah took Abraham, his son, and went to Haran and stopped there. God did not call Abraham's father.

God told Abraham, you leave your father and mother and come. But Abraham told his father and the father said, I am also coming. And so, because he went with his father, he did not reach Canaan and he stopped halfway.

See, your father may not be as wholehearted as you are. What did God tell Abraham? Chapter 12, verse 1. Leave your relatives, leave your father's house and come, I will show you a land where you are to go. But he did not do that.

That is the first mistake. He listened to his father. And his father did not take him to Canaan and said, Haran is a good place, let's stop here.

And do you know what God did? Sometimes God has to do something terrible to lead us into his purpose. Sometimes God has to do something terrible to lead us into his purpose. God killed his father so that Abraham could move on.

See, chapter 11, verse 32. Terah died. And then, chapter 12, verse 4, Abraham went forth as the Lord spoke to him.

And again he made a mistake. He took Lot with him. The Lord had said, leave all your relatives behind.

I have seen this with many Christians. They don't obey God. They are still attached to some relatives on earth.

And they become like a millstone around their neck. You have to love Jesus more than you love your relatives and your parents. So, he made one mistake, then another mistake.

And because he took Lot with him, he had so many problems. Whenever you disobey God, you are going to add problems to your life. And then, finally, he travelled all the way to Canaan.

And we read in verse 9 of chapter 12. He arrived in Canaan. A place called Negev.

And as soon as he reached there, there was a famine. Verse 10. Now, here is a very interesting question.

When God leads you, will you run into problems? Definitely. Jesus' life was full of problems. But he overcame all of them.

He got into a boat, there will be a storm. If he goes to preach in a synagogue, they will pull him out and try to kill him. Even when he was born as a baby, they tried to kill him.

Even when he was born as a baby, they tried to kill him. His whole life was full of people trying to trouble him. But he was in the perfect will of God.

I have seen that in my life too. I left my job 47 years ago. Now when I look back, I see all types of problems that came in my life.

So many, many, many things. But every one of them, God had a plan to make me an overcomer. When I came through that problem, I came out as a better man.

I want to tell you something. If God leads you somewhere, you may find when you reach there, there is a famine. And then, you shouldn't run away.

You must say, Lord, you told me to come here. No, there is a famine here. What shall I do? Again Abraham made a mistake.

He did not seek God. He said, Oh, there is a famine. Let me use my mind and do what I want to do.

He went to Egypt. Verse 10. I am just trying to show you the mistakes Abraham made.

To encourage you to believe that God did not choose a perfect man. He should have listened to God. Can God help people when there is a famine? He gave the Israelites manna from heaven every day for 40 years.

The wilderness was the worst place of famine. There is nothing you can get there. When there was a famine in Israel, God fed Elijah with the crows.

What is difficult for God? What should Abraham have said? Lord, you told me to come here. What shall I do? Run away? Many years ago, in 1972, my wife and I were living in Vellore. But we felt the Lord was telling us to move and we did not know where to go.

We thought, shall I go to Chennai or go to Bangalore? We knew a lot of people in Chennai. We knew nobody in Bangalore. And the Lord told us to go to Bangalore.

Where we did not know anybody. So we went there. A few months after we reached there, I got such a severe attack of asthma.

We moved there in April 1972. In April 1972, we went to Bangalore. It started raining in June.

And the asthma began. I could not sleep at night. I had to sit in a chair and pump into my mouth in order to breathe.

I could not lie down. And I said, Lord, what is this? Did we make a mistake? Did you lead us here or not? And I felt, to the best of our knowledge, my wife and I felt, this is where God led us. So we said, we are not going to run away.

And we struggled for 2 or 3 years. And then finally God filled me with the Holy Spirit. And I was healed completely also.

And then I never had a problem after that for all these 40 years. But I can see now when I look back, that was an attack of the devil to get me to go away from Bangalore or somewhere else. And what a different story my life would have been if I had gone away.

And thank God that I stayed. Even though I could not understand why God allowed me to get asthma. Now I understand that He allowed me to get it to show me that He could heal me also.

I have never had to use pump or medicine or anything. So it was something like that here. There is a famine.

Abraham should have stayed there. Lord you told me to come here. There is a famine, tell me what I should do.

I am not going to run away to Egypt. Now you know what happened when Abraham went to Egypt? Here was the first problem. When he went there, there was a king there called Pharaoh.

And he was afraid that Pharaoh will look at his wife Sarah who was a very beautiful lady. So he told Sarah please tell people that you are my sister not my wife. 12.13 See this verse.

Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me that I may live. Because if you say you are my wife Pharaoh will kill me and take you. So say you are my sister.

Why? So that I can live. Supposing Sarah says But Abraham, Pharaoh will then rape me and take me into his harem of wives. Sarah never mind if you suffer I can live.

What type of husband was he? Allowing somebody to rape his wife so that he can live. I hope none of you husbands will tell lies like that. I am trying to show you what number of mistakes Abraham made.

You have probably had many bible studies of Abraham's faith and all that. I am giving you a bible study of Abraham's mistakes. To encourage you to know that God could even use such a man.

And Pharaoh took Sarah But God protected Abraham Verse 17 Lot of plagues came there. Verse 17 And then Pharaoh realized this is because I took this man's wife. And Pharaoh came and rebuked Abraham.

Verse 18 and 19 It's a terrible thing when a worldly person has to come and rebuke an unbeliever saying why are you behaving like this. And then we read he had problems with Lot. Of course God can bring good out of evil.

That is true. God brings a lot of good out of all these things that I said. But the best thing is to trust God.

And to believe that if God told me to do something I do it and I am not going to tell lies and cheat and run away in order to save my own life. But God did not forsake Abraham because he made these mistakes. That is what I want to share with you.

You also may have made mistakes in your past life which have created so many problems for your family. So I am saying this to encourage you that God who did not forsake Abraham will not forsake you. You can still honor God.

See Romans chapter 4. We read in Romans 4 that God told Abraham in verse 17 A father of many nations I have made you. And he did not have any children through Sarah. But it says he believed verse 18 in hope, against hope he believed.

Because the Lord said look at the stars you will get so many children. He had no hope. Look what it says.

His body verse 19 was dead. That means when he was 86 years old his body had little life he could produce one son. That was Ishmael.

God said no that is not the one I chose. You have to get a son through Sarah. By the time Abraham became 99 years old his body was dead.

He could not have a child even if he wanted to. So God and Sarah of course was barren. So verse 19 says both bodies were dead.

How can they have children? So God had to do a miracle in Sarah's womb and a miracle in Abraham's body. God gave them a supernatural child his name was Isaac. That's an amazing thing.

Many people think it was only Sarah's womb that was dead. But God waited till Abraham's body also died. And during those years it says verse 20 he did not waver in unbelief.

One year, two years, three years, four years no children. He kept 13, 14 13, 14 years no children. But he believed God said I'll get it I'll believe it.

Look at this phrase he grew strong in faith giving glory to God. He grew strong in faith giving glory to God. How do you give glory to God? It's not just by shouting praises in the meeting.

It is when you have a difficulty and a prayer that is not answered you still trust God one year, two years ten years Lord I believe you are true your promise is true for example Romans 6, 14 says sin will not rule over you. You believe it because you heard it in the church and you read it in the word of God. I'm such a slave to anger but anger will not rule over me the bible says.

Some of you young people you are such slaves to lusting with your eyes but you say Lord your word says that will not rule over me. Sin will not rule over me. One year sin is still ruling five years sin is still ruling ten years and you say I don't care how long it takes I believe a day will come in my life when sin will not rule over me.

That is how Abraham believed for 14 years before he got to answer. And during that period he gave glory to God by believing. Do you know that you can give glory to God even when you are defeated? Abraham gave glory to God when he had no children.

How did he give glory to God? He said Lord I don't have this child yet but I believe your promise. Can you say that? Lord I still haven't got victory over my anger or my dirty thoughts and some bad habits but I believe your word. Romans 6 14 sin will not rule over me.

That was my experience. I believed it and for years after that I was defeated defeated defeated. I kept on going defeated till I reached the bottom of the pit.

There also I said Romans 6 14 is true. I don't know when it will be true in my life but it will be true one day. Like Abraham one day it became true in my life.

I say that for your encouragement. Don't give up. Say Lord I don't care how long it takes.

Romans 6 14 is going to be true in my life. We can give glory to God verse 20 by being strong in faith. Tongue under control all your life.

Many of you already know that with all the effort you have made you cannot control your tongue when you are irritated. You know that and even after this conference it will be the same. But the Lord is not asking you can you control your tongue.

The Lord is asking do you believe I can do it for you. I am not asking this Bible can you stand up there without falling. But do you believe I can hold you up that you don't fall.

That is what the Lord is asking. Matthew 9 28 Not do you believe you can open your eyes. Do you believe I can do it for you.

That is the question the Lord is asking you with every promise in scripture. Do you believe I Jesus can do this for you. Some people will say I am not so sure Lord.

Because I have been losing my temper for 30 years. That is exactly like the Israelites who looked at the giants in Canaan and said no Lord you can't overcome them these people have ruled this land for 30 years. God was angry with 600,000 Israelites for insulting him and saying you are not as strong as these giants.

God was so angry he killed all of them. That is what the Bible says. But two people Joshua and Caleb Lord we believe you can do this for us.

And they went in. What is the difference between them and the others? Their muscles are the same as the others. But they believe God.

There are believers who are weaker than you, more defeated than you who have come to victory. Who know less of the Bible than you. How did they come to a Godly life? Not because they are better than you.

They honored God by saying God you can do this for us. You know supposing you say Lord I just could not live a life of victory because I had a miserable wife at home. Always she irritated me I could never get victory in my life.

In the last day when Jesus comes and you stand before the Lord the Lord says why you could not live victoriously. And you say Lord I told you so many times this terrible wife you gave me. You know what the Lord will do? In that last day from the crowd of millions of believers there he will call one man.

You over there come here. And then he will tell you now let me show you a video of this man's home life. And you will see his wife was ten times worse than your wife.

But see how he lived in this home patiently forgiving never losing his temper. What was the difference between you and him? He was a much weaker person than you. Only one difference.

You tried tried tried to overcome your anger. This man said I cannot overcome it. He said Lord you can do it for me.

That's why he got victory. And that day you will feel so ashamed. Lord was that the way? Wasn't it by my struggling I had to overcome? No.

Struggling is to live under the law. You can never win by living under the law. It's like the disciples trying to catch fish.

They try try try try no fish. What was the Lord saying? You cannot get it. When they gave up the Lord says do you believe I can give you some fish in your boat? Put your net on that side.

Suddenly all the fish in the lake came into that net. All the big ones. What did they learn there? One very important lesson.

Without Jesus I can do nothing. With Jesus I can do all things. That is faith.

Faith is first of all learning. John 15 verse 5 Without Jesus I can do zero. Some of you think with a little bit of struggle you can at least do something.

Then you have to wait some more years. You have to wait some more years till you realize you can do nothing. You can try with Hagar and try this and try that to produce a son.

It will not be God's will. You have to come to zero. Say Lord I give up.

That's the place I came to. About 39 years ago I said Lord I cannot get there. Lord said no I'll do it for you.

He filled me with the Holy Spirit. And he did something I could never do. Every church that has been planted I did not plant one of them.

The Lord did it. Everything. Every message I preach.

I say Lord I've got nothing to say. But the Lord says will you let me speak through you? I say sure. He speaks through me.

That is the way to preach God's word. Go to God and say Lord I'm a stupid person like a donkey. You could speak through Balaam's donkey.

Why can't you speak through me? It is not by our struggling. Dear brothers and sisters. Everything in the Christian life is by faith.

And faith is to believe that Jesus can do it. I can't do it but he can do it. Whatever he has promised.

I'm not trying to claim things he has not promised. You know today in the Christian world they are telling you to ask God for houses and cars and all that. He taught us to pray give us this day our daily bread.

Did he say give us this day our daily ice cream? No. Ice cream is not necessary. Rice is necessary.

In Israel it was bread. So today in Tamil Nadu we have to pray Lord give us this day our daily rice and curry. That's enough.

We don't want to pray for cake and ice cream. I don't want houses and cars. Lord I can trust you that you will give me what is enough for me.

That's enough. But give me purity in my life. Give me holiness in my life.

That is what God wants to give you more than earthly things. So how do we honor God? What did we read in Romans 4? He gave glory to God by believing Romans 4 21 that God can do what he has promised. So what am I asking you to do? You read a promise in scripture.

God will make all things work together for your good if you love him. Lord I can't do it. But I believe that all the evil that other people do to me you will make it work for my good.

So many people have done evil to me in 50 years of my believing. But I tell you before God every one of those things worked for my good. It made me a better person.

Believe. When you read a promise in the new testament the Lord says to you do you believe I can do that for you? I did it for that brother. I can do it for you.

What God has done for me he will do for you. And one day you will be able to tell others what God has done for me he can do for you. It's no use just spreading knowledge to people.

We must spread faith to people. Timothy's mother gave him faith. Timothy's grandmother gave his mother faith.

Today a lot of people are just spreading knowledge. When we preach God's word we must give people faith in God's promises. That is how we honor God.

So let's learn to honor God by trusting his promise that he will do it all for us. Even if you are the weakest believer in Tamil Nadu God can do it for you. Let's pray.

Heavenly father only you can create that faith in people's hearts. Lord I pray that these dear brothers and sisters will stop struggling and start trusting you. And believe that they can never do it on their own but you can do it for them.

Thank you lord. In Jesus name.

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