

Questions & Answers (March 2020)

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to believe in the sovereignty of God, acknowledging that God is in control of all things and nothing takes Him by surprise. It highlights the importance of humility, faith, and dependence on God's grace for strength and victory over sin. The speaker discusses the distinctive message of true Christians, focusing on the need to turn to God in repentance and faith, recognizing our weaknesses and yielding to God's will. The sermon also addresses the role of feelings and emotions in the Christian life, emphasizing the need to live by faith rather than feelings, and to continually judge oneself in light of God's Word to grow in humility and grace. Assurance of salvation is based on faith in Christ's work and grace, not on our own merits, with a call to maintain faith in God's promises despite failures and imperfections.

Scripture: James 4:6, Romans 6:14, Hebrews 13:9, 2 Corinthians 12:9, John 15:4, Philippians 3:12, Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 12:22, Luke 1:15, Amos 5:24

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Faith and Humility"

Description

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Transcript

Okay, we will begin with the questions that were sent to me. The first question is, at this time, a lot of people are speaking about God and spirituality and quoting religious texts by secular people, Hindus, Muslims, and even religious Christians. So what do you think is the distinctive message of true Christians in the body of Christ at this time? Well, there are two messages that I preached which were circulated recently for all who subscribe to Work for the Weak.

And if you listen to them, you get an idea of what I felt was the need at this time for folks to hear and understand what God is saying. So, the main thing is that we believe God is sovereign. We must never doubt that.

Jesus taught us to pray to our Father who art in heaven, which means we pray to a Father who loves us and one who is running the universe. We must never forget that God runs the universe. He is still on the throne and nothing takes Him by surprise.

Whatever has taken man by surprise in the last couple of months was something God foreknew from all eternity. So, every true Christian must believe that. God gets no surprises.

And if we walk in the will of God, we just fit into God's plan and it may be a surprise to us because we don't have the mind of God. But we know that we live under the covering of a Father who knows the end from the beginning. A lot of people don't know when this present pandemic will end.

God already knows that. He knows all the way to the end of history and the end of His age. So, what we need to claim at this time is the sovereignty of God and God rules this universe.

He knows what He is doing, but at the same time, He says in Isaiah 55, verse 8 and 9, My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. 101 things on earth that we can't fully understand why God does it certain ways, but we accept God's way because we acknowledge that His way is superior to ours.

And any Christian who has the humility to acknowledge the truth that God's ways are far higher than ours, as high as the heaven is above the earth, will say, I don't understand everything, but I believe God is working everything out perfectly to draw people to Christ. God wants all people to repent. The Bible says that.

He doesn't want anyone to perish. Second Peter chapter 3, I think it's verse 10, tells us very clearly. God doesn't want anybody to perish.

He wants everyone on earth to repent. And everything is designed towards that end. So, even this that's going on now is designed towards that end.

And I'm sure a lot of people who never prayed in their life have started praying now. A lot of people who never thought about death are thinking about death now, which is a good thing. It will help them to think about their relationship with God.

It's not that God frightens people. God doesn't want to frighten anybody. But people have to be aware that sin has its consequences.

And what a man sows that he'll reap. And to recognize that all the evil in the world, including what's happening now, is a result of man's sin, Adam's sin, which has come down to all of us. So, we don't just quote religious texts or talk about God in a remote type of way.

We believe in a God who lives within us, Christ who lives within our hearts. And I believe that what others should see in us at this time is a strong faith that God has numbered the hairs on our head and knows every sparrow that falls. And therefore, we are confident.

And it doesn't mean we are careless. We are cautious. We take the same precautions that everybody else in the world takes, like washing our hands.

And that's not an act of unbelief. We don't tempt God. We don't jump off the temple and say, God will protect us, like the devil tempted Jesus to say.

No. So, we don't violate the rules of hygiene and say, Oh, God will protect us. That is stupidity.

No, we are careful and wise. There's an amazing verse in John chapter 7, verse 1, which says, Jesus knew that the people in Judea were trying to kill him, and so he didn't go there. Why is that? Was he afraid? He was never afraid of anything.

But he took normal human precautions, and we must take that too. Jesus once said in Matthew 10, when people persecute you in one city, flee to another city. Don't walk.

Flee. Run. Common sense.

So, common sense is as much a gift of God as faith. We must not forget that the two are not in conflict with each other. So, that's what people must see in us Christians, that we have faith, and we have common sense.

Okay. Another question is, you know, concerning where someone coming from another background, and where there's difference of opinion in the home between husband and wife, father and mother, concerning the raising of children. And if you're not well-versed in the scripture, how do we answer our children's questions? Well, there's nothing wrong in acknowledging that we don't know the Bible well.

If you're converted late in life and you don't know the Bible well, there's nothing wrong in being honest about it. And let's go to someone who does know the scripture, and to ask that person to guide us. And we must have faith that if we honor God and pray, especially pray, no matter how much you have failed in your past life, if you pray that God will bring your children to Christ, I believe in some way you'll see an answer to that prayer.

So, we must never give up praying for our children. That is the main thing I would say that we should do for our children. And, as a good opportunity, we must share the word of God.

And where we don't understand something, it's good to get a book that will explain it. For example, I have told all people who come to our church, to CFC churches, to read two books. Very small books.

They're available in the CFC bookstores. One is the real truth, a very little booklet. And the other is a good foundation.

Just those two. Everyone who comes to the church must read those two books. Very small books.

They cost so little. And they're also available online. But they explain the basic truths of Christianity and how to be saved.

Now, if a person doesn't take the trouble to read thin booklets like that, and expects God Almighty to come down from heaven and explain things to him, God's not going to do that. God doesn't help lazy people. No.

But if he sees a person as earnest enough to find out the truth, and is willing to spend a little time reading a book like this, which will take him maybe a couple of hours, then God will give him further light. So we must be willing to read something so that we can explain to our children the things that they don't understand. And there's no harm in saying to the children, well, certain things I still don't know.

But I can explain to you the basic truths of the Christian faith. We should all know that if we are born again then we do not have to be dependent on the elders in the church to explain everything. There are more

complicated things in Scripture which we can go to them for.

Okay. Another question is concerning also present events. Do you think God has allowed this virus to occur to cause people to turn to him? I certainly believe that, that God shows man his impotence and helplessness.

See, we are living in a time where a lot of men are very proud of man's accomplishments and think that man is almighty, almost to that extent. And here is something, a small little virus that you can't even see under a microscope is enough to humble the entire world. And God shows how he is almighty and people begin to think about him, turn to him, even if it is the fear of death.

That's a good thing. So I certainly believe God allows everything on earth to fulfill his purpose. And certainly one of the things is to turn people to him in repentance.

Another question is what role do feelings and emotions play in the Christian life? What about religious affections when we face feelings of hopelessness, depressed feelings, condemning feelings, and anxious feelings, discouraged feelings, apathetic, lazy feelings, and feelings of coldness or distance from God, fearful feelings, et cetera, et cetera. Do these indicate a flaw in our walk with God or are they just temptations from the flesh that will come from time to time or for longer times? Can there be physical causes for this? Can God himself allow us to go through extended times with wrong feelings? What should we do when our feelings don't match up to what they should be resembled or what they've been at other times? Should we break down and continue to obey in spite of our feelings? So one of the very important things that we need to learn in our Christian life is God does not expect us to live by our feelings. Feelings go up and down, and your Christian life will go up and down if you live by them.

There's a parable that speaks of three men walking on a narrow wall. Narrow wall means a compound, a wall around a big compound, a pretty high wall, a very narrow wall, and they're walking on it. Say, think of a wall about 100 feet high.

And there are three people walking on it. It's a very narrow wall where only one person can walk at a time. Right in front is fact, F-A-C-T, which is the Word of God, the eternal facts of God.

Behind fact is faith. Faith is looking at fact or looking at God's Word and following along. And behind faith is feeling.

So it's fact, faith, and feeling. In that order, walking on this wall, and everything's going fine as long as faith looks at fact, the facts of God's Word. Feeling follows along wonderfully.

But after a while, faith turns around to see whether feeling is following. And as he turns around, because the wall is so narrow, he falls down. Faith falls down, and immediately feeling falls down also because he's following faith.

And that's a very beautiful parable of how it should be. Keep that in mind. The moment you take your faith away from looking at the facts of God's Word and turn around and look at feeling, you're going to fall, and feeling is going to fall too.

So God has created us in such a way that it's our will that must be yielded to him. We have no control over our feelings. We have no control over our physical body and, you know, to be protected from viruses or sicknesses.

But we do have a total control over our will at all times. And that is what we are to yield to God. Jesus said, not as I will, but as thou wilt, O Father.

That is the whole secret of the Christian life. It is the will that must be yielded. The mind and the feelings and the will are the three parts of our soul.

The spirit is the deepest part of us, of the heart, but outside that is the soul and outside that is the body. And the soul has got three parts, our mind, with which we think, our emotions, with which we feel, and our will, with which we decide. And if I live in my mind, I'll just be an intellectual and a legalist and I'll never be a spiritual man.

If I live in my feelings, I'll be up and down all the time. I must live in my will. I choose.

I, for example, in a very discouraging situation, I say, I refuse to be discouraged. I will only praise God. That's a choice of the will.

I don't depend on feelings, for example, in forgiving others. Very often the devil torments us by saying, Oh, but you still remember what that person did against you. Well, I have no control over my memory.

My memory is not being blotted out. I remember all the evil that people did to me, but I choose not to live there. I live in my will and in my will I have forgiven every single person who has harmed me in my life.

So what if I remember it? I don't live in my memory. I live in my will and I don't live in my feelings. It doesn't matter whether I feel up or down one day.

In my will, I have chosen to deny my own will and do the will of God. That's what it means to take up the cross. So once we understand that, the devil loses his power over us.

The devil keeps his power over us by making us feel that, making us think that our feelings are important. Oh, you feel condemned. You feel depressed.

I say, I don't care what I feel. In my will, I've chosen to do God's will. I believe God is on the throne.

I express things like that to God. Lord, you're on the throne. As far as I know, I don't want anything outside of your will for my life.

And if the future looks bleak, that's okay. But the promises of God are bright, so it doesn't matter. My future is as bright as the promises of God.

Not as depressing as what circumstances around kill me. So it's very important that we allow the devil to see that we have stopped living by feelings. And we refuse to get discouraged.

We refuse to feel hopeless because God is on the throne. Whenever we feel depressed and discouraged, as if we're saying, God has vacated His throne. And He's not going to make everything work for my good.

You know, if you believe that everything is going to work for your good, how can you be depressed? How can you be depressed if you see everything around you working for your very best? It's when we don't believe that. When we don't believe God's Word. Because we look at circumstances.

Very often, circumstances are temporary. That may change tomorrow. It may change next year.

So I don't live by what's happening right now. I say, my Heavenly Father runs this universe. And when I pray, I pray our Father who art in Heaven, which teaches me two things.

One, I have a Father who loves me. And secondly, He's in Heaven and running this universe. If I ever forget those two facts, I should not proceed with my prayer.

I have no basis to pray. Because when I pray, I won't believe it will work. Either I will think that God doesn't love me, or I'll think there's some circumstance which God cannot control.

That's why Jesus said, when you pray, begin by saying, Our Father, who art in Heaven, teaching me, I'm talking to someone who loves me intensely, more than any human being, who loved me enough to send his son to die for my sins, Our Father. And He's my Dad. He's not just some CEO of some company or CEO of the universe.

He's my Dad. He is the CEO of the universe, but He happens to be my Dad. And I call Him Dad.

And I also know He's in Heaven. He runs this universe. I know what Jesus said, that He's got all authority in Heaven and Earth.

He's never abdicated that throne. He's never given up that authority. And if I believe all that, I'll tell you honestly, you'll never be depressed.

I used to be very discouraged in the early part of my Christian life, till I understood these truths that I'm just talking about. And I'll tell you honestly, it's been many, many years since I ever got discouraged. That's the honest truth.

And yet, the early part of my Christian life, for 15, 16 years of my life after I was born again, I was frequently discouraged. Because I did not learn to live in my will. I did not found my life on the fact that I have a Dad who runs this universe.

That wasn't constantly before me. I would pray, but Jesus said, whenever you pray, remember, you're not praying to your Dad. Remember, He runs this universe.

If you don't believe those two things, don't pray. Because you won't have faith. Every time you pray, you don't have to necessarily say our Father's word in Heaven.

But you must believe that you're talking to your Dad. Who loves you intensely. So intensely that He sent His Son to die for you.

And the Bible says in Romans 8, He who did not spare His own Son. How shall He not willingly give you everything? There's no place for depression there. Self-condemnation is another thing the devil keeps on using.

You're not perfect. Well, I knew long ago I was not perfect. And I know right now I'm not as perfect as I should be.

I'm pressing on to perfection. So the devil is not going to be able to condemn me by saying I'm not perfect. I'm pressing on to perfection.

And wherever I have light, I confess it to God and press on. I don't overcome everything in one day. But little by little as I look over the past, I say hey, I've overcome some things.

And I'm going to overcome the rest as well. One day I'm going to be like Jesus. And anxiety about the future? Not possible if you believe that your Father in Heaven is working every single thing for your very best.

There's no place for discouragement or depression. Now I must make one qualification there. Sometimes we go through physical problems in our body that can make us weary and weak.

And there's what we call a clinical depression. Now I'm not talking about that. But even if you're a strong Christian, you can even overcome that by the grace of God.

But when the Bible says I must walk as Jesus walked, will I be tempted? I'm still tempted to be discouraged, to be depressed, but I refuse to yield to them. I say I refuse to be discouraged. I will only praise God, my Dad who runs this universe.

And I keep confessing that. You know the Bible says we overcome by the word of our testimony. That's how we overcome the devil.

Revelation chapter 12, verse 10 and 11. By the word of our testimony. The word of our testimony to Satan.

And so when Satan tempts me to be discouraged or anxious, I quote the word of God. My Heavenly Father runs this universe and He's going to make everything work out for my good. But I'll say one other thing, and that is if you have desires and ambitions which are outside the will of God, well, you've got to blame yourself.

You're going to be depressed. For example, if your aim is to make a lot of money on the stock market, you're going to be very depressed right now at this particular time. Or if you put a lot of money in there and a lot of it got lost, and you hoped you'd make a big killing on the stock market, well, you've got yourself to blame.

You reap what you sow. I'm not saying putting money in stocks is wrong. I'm saying putting your faith in it is wrong.

And making that your goal in life is wrong. We have to live on earth to have enough money to earn our living. That's about it.

Whichever way you invest it, our faith must not be in those things and our confidence was not in those things. I tell you, everything on earth is going to collapse. You can be pretty sure of that.

So make sure your faith and confidence is in God alone in these days. And the coronavirus has really taught the whole world that you can't run this, you can't even run this world. How in the world are you going to face eternity? So never get discouraged.

If you slip up, confess your sin to God and believe the blood of Jesus cleanses you immediately. And Hebrews 8.12 says, your sins and iniquities are remembered no more. Believe that and move on.

Can I ask a follow-up question on that? Can you give some practical advice on distinguishing between what feelings may be related to temperament? So some person may be more sanguine or melancholic.

How do we know whether the feelings we're having relate more to the kind of person we are? What's a practical guide to know where those emotions are straying outside of, you know, being spirit-controlled? See, temperament is different from spirituality. Like some people are extroverts and some people are more inward-looking.

Now, both people can be spiritual. Both the extrovert and the introvert can be spiritual. Because if I say God has made me in a certain way, I remember because my basic temperament is inward-looking and introverted from my childhood.

I'm not the happy-go-lucky person who goes slapping people on the back and says, hi, how are you? It doesn't come naturally to me. It would be a great effort to me to do that. And I remember studying a little bit about temperaments in my younger days as a Christian, and that helped me tremendously to discover that every temperament has got its weakness.

The extrovert may be a popular person and the life of the party and things like that because he's always thinking outside himself. But the extrovert can be very careless in his duties. He won't be meticulous.

If you want to get a job done perfectly, give it to an introvert, not to an extrovert. The introvert will do the job perfectly. But if you want someone to be a leader and to challenge people and all that, the introvert may not be the right person.

Both are needed in the church. And some of the great writers were introverts mostly. They were meticulous in what they wrote.

And some of the great leaders were extroverts. What does the church need? The church needs both. There were extroverts and introverts among the disciples.

I think Peter and John were completely different in their temperament, and God chose both of them. So nobody should feel discouraged. What I learned was that if I was an introvert and I feel sad that I can't go around being the life of the party and challenging people, and I say I want to be an extrovert, I'll get his weaknesses too.

I'll be careless in my work and I'll get angry. No, extroverts are the ones who get angry very quickly. And introverts are the ones who get discouraged very quickly.

And people say discouragement is something like bottled up anger. He just keeps it inside and gets discouraged. The extrovert just lets it all out and gets angry.

So these temperaments mean nothing. If your basic desire is to live for God and deny your will, whatever your temperament, God can help you to overcome it. And gradually, you'll find as you seek to follow Christ, over a period of time, God changes your temperament to be more Christ-like.

I mean, today if I tell people that I'm an introvert, most people won't believe it. But it's true. It was much worse earlier on.

Gradually, God changes you to be a balanced person like Christ. But you'll never be perfect in this till the day Christ returns. So it's a process, and that extrovert has got to change and become more like Christ, and the introvert has got to change and become more like Christ.

And meanwhile, he just accepts the fact that I'm a different type of person. You see, the danger is when I compare myself with another person. There's this great verse in 1 Corinthians 10, and I think it's verse 12, which says, sorry, 2 Corinthians 10, and verse, I think it's verse 12, just one minute.

2 Corinthians 10, yeah, verse 12, the last part. Those who measure themselves with each other, and compare themselves with each other, my paraphrase is, they are spiritual idiots. They are without understanding.

So if you want to be a spiritual idiot, measure yourself with other believers, and compare yourself with other believers. I'm not going to do that. I did that my other days, it led me to depression.

And you'll find something in another person which is better than yours. He's more meticulous about something, or he's a happy-go-lucky person, always appears to be cheerful. Those who compare themselves with themselves are without understanding.

And yet the Bible says that God has put every member in the body of Christ exactly like he wanted them to be. Think of this verse in 1 Corinthians, and chapter 12. It speaks about certain members who are different from other members in the body of Christ.

This answers this question. 2 Corinthians 12, and it speaks about certain members of our body, verse 22, sorry, 1 Corinthians, not 2 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12, and verse 22. The weaker members of our body are more necessary.

And he says those members of the body which we deem to be less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor. And our less presentable members become much more presentable. See, there are parts of the body we conceal, because they're not so presentable.

But they're very important parts of the body. You know that. And there are inward parts of our body, like the kidney and the liver and all, which we never even see.

We never get exposed. They are some of the most important parts of our body. And he says our presentable members don't need to be covered up so much, but God has composed the body, 1 Corinthians 12, 24, in such a way that he's given more abundant honor to that member of the body which lacked presentability, as it were.

And the purpose is that each member values the other, and that they have the same care for one another. And so, God values even the weaker member. And if you're a godly person, you'll value every member of the body of Christ, irrespective of whether they are extroverts or introverts, or whatever their personality is like.

And we must never, very often, we are not happy with our type of personality because we feel it's not getting us enough honor before others who look for some other type of person. So I say, I am myself. And I encourage everybody, be yourself, but recognize that you've got a flesh that's corrupt, and every extrovert has got a flesh that's corrupt, and the introvert's got a flesh that's corrupt, and don't let that depress you.

There's a lot more on that, but you can ask God to give you more light on it. Okay, another question is, but remember what I said, live in your will. Don't get depressed by temperament, or your circumstances, or your feelings, or any of that thing.

Lord, in my will, you know deep down, I've chosen to do your will. As I said, in forgiveness. You may remember what somebody did against you, but you say to the Lord, Lord, you know my will, I have forgiven that person.

I don't care if what he did comes back to my memory every single day of my life. I will not yield to it. I have forgiven that person completely from my heart.

I wish him no evil. What can I do about my memory? I have no control over my memory. Okay, another question is, I've asked God to deliver me from spiritual pride.

Now I'm finding it seems that I have less grace, and even powerless at times against temptations, that he used to give me victory over. Well, when we think about victory, it could be that we are careless in some area, and that's why we are defeated, and as we grow spiritually, we should be getting more and more light on sin in our life. Is this a normal part of the process of growing up? See, there are various ways in which God humbles our pride, and anything that God allows that makes you small in the eyes of others, you should be thankful for.

Lord, I don't want to be big in the eyes of others. I'm happy to be made small. I want to be great in God's eyes.

See, one of the verses that challenged me when I was a very young person, one of my great heroes as a young Christian, was John the Baptist. He was an amazing man, basically because he was absolutely fearless, and he gave his life for it. But one thing that was prophesied about him before he was born, is a thing that came home to my heart.

It says in Luke chapter 1, when the angel came to Zachariah, who was an old man, and told him, you're going to have a son. Your wife is going to give birth. And he said, you've got to name him John.

And one of the first things he said about him in Luke 1-15 is, he will be great in the sight of the Lord. What an expression. And I said, Lord, that's what I want.

Because I want with all my heart to be great in the sight of the Lord. And then he lived a very disciplined life, and as a result he would turn many people to the Lord. It's a beautiful thing, if you can pray that God will make that true in your life.

Luke 1-15 and 16. Lord, make me great in your sight, and help me to live a disciplined life, filled with the Holy Spirit, and turning many people to you. All mentioned in verse 15 and 16 of Luke 1. Make that your goal.

So, we don't want to be great in man's eyes. If I'm willing to be small in man's eyes, and say, Lord, I never want honor before people. I want to dive to the opinions of men.

You don't realize what slaves we are to the opinions of men. Every one of us, it takes years and years and years to break free from it. And I'll tell you this, the only way I got more and more light on it, was by my judging myself every single day of my life.

It's become a habit with me now. To judge myself every single day of my life. Every sermon I preach, I go home and judge myself.

How was it, Lord? Was there anything in it which I said to impress people? Did I crack a joke there just to say something funny? Did it take away from the seriousness of what I was saying? Or, was I boring? Did I go on too long? Lord, please give me light. Don't let me have such high thoughts about myself. Let me judge myself.

And Lord, in this conversation with this other person, did I say something which was unwise or which unnecessarily hurt people? Let me judge myself. Very often as an elder, I have to discipline people or take action in a church. I go back and judge myself.

Lord, was that too hard? Or sometimes, was it too soft? I need to judge myself. Whatever your responsibility is, if you judge yourself, and you're serious about it, I believe God will give you... God is the only one who can give you light on yourself. Lord, give me light on myself.

I want to eliminate all pride. I want to come to the place where I have zero pride. Because Jesus said, learn humility from me.

It's the one thing he told us to learn. Learn from me, for I am humble of heart and gentle of heart. And there are two things we just don't have.

I'll tell you this. There are two things we just don't have as human beings. Humility and gentleness.

We are basically proud and we are basically hard. Husbands are hard on their wives. Proud.

Many wives are hard on their husbands. So Jesus said, learn humility and gentleness from me. I've got to humble myself and say, Lord, I need to learn that.

I want to spend my life, I want a lifetime education in humility and gentleness. Please give it to me and I want to judge myself. And I believe that if we do that, God will show us more and more areas of pride in our life where we can judge ourselves and cleanse ourselves.

And I'll tell you something. If you, for example, if you have hurt somebody, to go and humble yourself and ask forgiveness from that person. That will shatter your pride a little bit.

Especially if you have to ask forgiveness from somebody who is much younger than you. Or ask forgiveness from an unbeliever whom you've hurt. Yeah, do it.

If I avoid those situations, I will never, never grow in humility. And the greatest thing is to look at the life of Jesus and to read the Gospels with asking the Holy Spirit to show me the humility of Jesus in the Gospels. In the different situations, read between the lines and say, Lord, show me where was Jesus humbling himself.

Not just the obvious ones like washing people's feet. But the more subtle ones that you see here and there where you see his humility. And looking at Jesus, that's the secret of the Christian life.

And if we walk that way, we'll find that, you know, God gives grace to the humble. And I find more and more grace in my life. So when I don't find grace in my life, when I'm defeated by sin, for example, whenever I'm defeated by sin, I say to myself, Romans 6.14 was not fulfilled in my life at this moment.

Because Romans 6.14 says, sin cannot rule over you. No sin when you're under grace. And Lord, at this moment, I slipped up maybe in my thoughts or in some one rude word that maybe you spoke to your wife

or your husband or someone.

I was not under grace at that moment. I got all anxious and worried in some situation. I was not under grace at that moment because anxiety is a sin.

It's almost like saying, God is not ruling the universe at this moment. It looks as if the devil's taken over. That's anxiety.

And Lord, that's a sin that I've insulted you by acknowledging for a few moments that the devil was running this universe by my anxiety. No. Why did I not get grace? If I were under grace, sin, anxiety, fear, depression, nothing would rule me.

Why didn't I get grace? And I get the answer. God gives grace to the humble. So I say, Lord, then show me where was I proud.

So I've come to this conclusion that anytime I slip up in any area, it's because I was proud. I didn't get grace then. Because if I had grace, I wouldn't have slipped up.

So I judge myself and say, Lord, show me where was it the Lord shows me maybe a few days earlier that something happened and I got a bit fucked up with something I did or said or something somebody said about me that went to my head and I got a bit fucked up and I lost grace. That makes me more alert. Alert all the time.

I say, Lord, I never want that to happen. I want to be quick to recognize pride in me. And if you go that way, you will gradually learn more and more humility and the proof of it is you'll get more and more grace in your life.

To me, that is a test for myself. How do I know whether I'm going in humility? Am I getting more and more grace in my life to conquer sin? Am I getting light on sins in my life which I did not even know were sin earlier? Okay. And now the last question is, how can we have assurance of salvation and hold it firm? Is there any specific truth that we should hold on to or specific experience? Is our assurance based fully on faith in Christ and what He's done for us or something in ourselves that we must have assurance beyond trusting what He's accomplished? How can we maintain an assurance when we fail, when we haven't attained the standard of holiness we see in the Bible or that we hear preached? We must remember the standard in the Bible is a standard of perfection in Christ which we work towards.

We run the race. We haven't reached the finishing line yet. We shouldn't be stagnant, but we are not at the starting line.

We are born again and we press on towards perfection. And so I don't, none of us should be deluded that we have become perfect. Paul said at the end of his life in Philippians 3, I'm not yet perfect, but there's one thing I do.

I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus which is to become like Him. So how do I have assurance of my salvation? First of all, based on the fact that Christ died for my sins. My assurance of salvation comes from something outside of me.

It speaks of the anchor of the soul. And you know a ship to prevent itself from drifting drops an anchor and the anchor goes down. It doesn't hold on to the water.

It can't hold on to the water. It's got to hold on to something firm right at the bottom in the rocky soil. It holds on there and then no matter how much the wind hits the ship, it doesn't drift.

So I need to have my faith anchored in Christ and what He's done for me. Not in how good I am or how much I've progressed. No, no, no.

Christ has died for my sins. God loves me with an eternal love. On my part, what must I do? I must respond to that love.

When it says, by grace are you saved through faith. Patience to wait. There is God's part and man's part there.

Grace is God stretching out His hand giving us life, salvation, His nature, everything. Faith is my reaching out my hand and taking God's gift. If I don't take it, I don't get it.

So it's by grace through faith. So what is God's part? His part is grace to give me and He offers it to me all the time. I can't save myself.

I can't forgive my own sins. I need grace. I need to receive what Christ did for me on the cross.

But what is my part? I must take it. That's faith. I take it.

Even repentance is not a work. When the Bible says repentance and faith, salvation comes through these two things. What is repentance? See, I begin my life with my back towards God and my face towards the world and sin.

And God says, Come, I want to give you something. I want to give you salvation. I turn around.

What am I doing? That is repentance, just turning around. That's not a work. I'm just turning around with my back towards sin and the world and now facing God so that I can receive what He's giving freely.

Repentance is not a work. It's just turning around. And faith is just receiving what He has given.

So there's no... Salvation is not by works. Some people say, Why do you preach repentance? Salvation is not by works. I fully agree.

Salvation is not by works. It's entirely of grace through faith. But you can't receive something from God if you've got your back turned to Him.

You can't even receive that from a man. When a man comes to you with a gift, you don't have your back to him. You turn around and face him.

And supposing he's giving you \$100,000, you say, Well, I worked for that by turning around. What do you mean you worked for that by turning around? You just turned around in order to receive his free gift. You didn't do a single thing to receive that money.

So repentance is not a work. It's just turning around to receive what God gives. Faith is not a work.

It's just taking from God's hand what He gives. But we need to do that. So you say, What is my part? My part is to turn around and take what God gives.

Just like if somebody is standing behind you and says, Hey, I've got a gift for you. Free gift. You have to do nothing for it.

You turn around and take it. You do two things. You turn around and you take it.

But you can't say you did a work to receive that gift. It was completely free. So that is repentance and that is faith.

And faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, it says in Romans 10, verse 17. So, I must read God's Word and allow God to speak to me through it. Then I hear God's Word.

Faith comes not by reading. Faith comes by hearing. Romans 10, verse 17.

In other words, when I read this printed book called the Bible, I must hear what God is saying to me. That's how faith comes. And the more I read it, the more I meditate on God's Word, the more faith comes.

If I'm not going to meditate on it, then I don't get faith. Looking unto Jesus, that's another expression of faith. I look at Jesus and not at myself.

You know, it's after I look at Jesus, He shows me what is inside me. I'm not supposed to live my life looking inside me all the time. That's depressing.

Isaiah 6, it says, He looked up, saw God, then He saw His own need. That's the best way to see our own need. Having seen the glory of God, seeing what He's done for me.

So, if we follow these simple rules, simple principles, I believe we can have faith and we must never get depressed that we haven't become perfect. But we must press on to perfection. So that takes care of all these questions.

You can't think of grace as an absolute thing. It's either there or not there. The Bible says, Grow in grace.

So, grace is an increasing thing. Some people have more grace and some people have less. They've grown in grace.

2 Peter says that, Grow in grace. So, I would say it's not something we can... We look for definitions. The more technical you are, the more you look for a definition of everything.

And it's not easy to define it. There are many wrong definitions of grace. For example, the most common definition in evangelical circles is, Grace is God's unmerited favor.

And you've been long enough in evangelical Christianity, you would have heard it. Unmerited means, you just get it, whether you have any merit or not. But it is not true.

God gives grace to the humble. It's very clear in James chapter 4, 1 Peter 5. So, there is some merit there. It's merited.

The humble person merited it. Not because of good works. I'm not saying good works.

But because he was humble, he got grace. I mean, if it was completely unmerited, the proud person would get it too. Why doesn't he get it? Why does God do the opposite to the proud person by resisting him? So, we've got to get rid of all these wrong definitions which are not in scripture.

Another definition I've heard is God's riches at Christ's expense. G-R-A-C-E. God's riches at Christ's expense.

It's very clever. But I say, it's still given to the humble. And what does grace do? Well, Hebrews 13 verse 8 says, Grace strengthens the heart.

It strengthens my heart. It's a strength. And also 2 Corinthians 12 where the Lord told Paul, My grace is sufficient for you because my power is made perfect in your weakness.

So, grace is power. Grace is a power that shows effective like the living Bible says, my power shows itself most effectively in weak people. So, the more we recognize our weakness and the more God is able to make us realize we are totally weak, that we don't depend on ourselves, the more we can get grace.

To me, the picture that has helped me the most in my life, whether it is to overcome sin or to preach or to have a message available for God's people is the picture that Jesus used in John 15 and verse 4 and 5. I am the vine. You are the branches. We don't see vines so much in those days.

They saw it everywhere. Let's say I am the apple tree and you are the branch. So, I am a branch.

That branch cannot produce a single fruit by itself if it moves out of the tree. Fifty years of experience of producing apples, the moment it is cut off, it stops producing apples. There is no such thing as the branch coming to such a place where I say, now I can produce apples on my own.

Impossible. It has to remain in the tree. The first day it came in and then 50 years later, it is still by remaining.

Helpless dependence on the tree for sap to flow in, not once a day, but continuously, moment by moment. That to me is the most perfect picture of grace. A helpless dependence upon the Lord just like a branch in the tree Lord, I can do nothing.

All the things that I think I can do are not worth anything in eternity. But I can do nothing of eternal value if I don't depend on you all the time. And if I do depend on you, the flowing of the sap of God's grace is guaranteed.

And it's because we have got so much pride and self-confidence and thinking I can do this and I can do that or because I have done all this in the past I can do it now. Then, there are little blocks that come in the branch that prevents the sap from flowing in. So we've got to make sure that we have zero confidence in ourselves and 100% confidence in God.

And that comes through circumstances. In Paul's case, he needed a thorn in the flesh, which is a sickness. He even called it a messenger of Satan.

But he says God gave it to him. And it is some type of sickness I believe. But why in the world would God allow his faithful servant Paul to be sick? Because that is the only way he could make that man humble because he had such fantastic revelations.

I mean, you and I don't need it because we don't have such fantastic revelations. But the more we a man like Paul was so utterly faithful, utterly yielded, totally surrendered, he could not get grace without God giving him a sickness. Because God gives His grace to the humble and that's what the Lord told him.

I'm not going to take away that sickness but my grace is sufficient for you because my power is made perfect only when you're weak. And this sickness, Paul, is going to make you weak. It's going to make you small in the eyes of men.

As far as I've studied scripture, I think it was some type of problem Paul had in his eyes. I believe some type of pus that used to come out of his eyes all the time. Some sickness that made him repulsive in the eyes of others when he stood up to preach.

If it was some other weakness, some other part of his body that could be covered with his clothes, it wouldn't have been repulsive. You read in Galatians 4 that Paul says that they didn't feel repulsed by Paul. And then he goes on to say to the Galatians in chapter 4, you were willing to take your eyes and give it to me.

That's why I believe he had some problem with his eyes. That was his thorn in the flesh. And he must have thought, Lord, I look so repulsive when I stand up to preach.

Which I keep wiping this pus coming out of my eyes. Please heal me. The Lord said, no.

I'm going to make you small in the eyes of men. I'm going to make you small so that you don't have a problem with pride. Because you had such fantastic revelations.

You've written scripture. You've planted churches. You've done so many things.

The more God uses us, the more God has to work in us to break us and make us small in our own eyes. And if you yield completely to God and say, Lord, I only want grace in my life. I don't want honor of men.

I don't want approval of anything. I believe He'll do it. He'll do anything to break you.

He broke Jacob and made him an Israel. It takes longer with some people. He broke Peter by making him deny the Lord three times.

He broke Moses by making him live 40 years with his father-in-law. Have you ever thought of living with your father-in-law 40 years? I mean, one year is enough to humble most people. God said, I've got a great work for you, Moses.

I'm going to keep you 40 years with your father-in-law till you become a zero. And then I'll do the greatest work that any Israel has ever seen. That is God's way throughout scripture.

And the more God wants a purpose for your life, the more God will break you. He must be willing for that. And because many Christians are not broken, they rebel in some circumstances.

They question God. Why this? Why that? And they remain in the same level because God doesn't force a person to be broken. You've got to yield to it.

You've got to be willing. I believe that's one of the things we testify to in the breaking of bread. The bread is not a hard piece of rock.

It's so soft it breaks when you touch it. And it's as it were when I'm taking part in the breaking of bread, I'm saying, Lord, I want to be broken like this. And that's how Jesus was.

Jesus' will was like that broken bread. Broken so easily. That's why the Father could accomplish all His will in Jesus' life.

And that's the example for us. And that's what we're testifying to in the breaking of bread.

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