

Righteous

by Zac Poonen

The path of the righteous is not an up and down experience, but rather a steady upward growth in faith, which requires believing God's promise and allowing Him to write His laws in our hearts and minds.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:18, Romans 4:20

Topics: "Righteousness", "Faith and Transformation"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the paths of the righteous, emphasizing that unlike the fluctuating experiences of Old Testament figures, the life of a believer should be a steady ascent towards holiness, akin to the rising sun. He illustrates that true righteousness is not about adhering to rules but about a transformative relationship with God through faith and the Holy Spirit. Poonen encourages believers to trust in God's promises, asserting that faith is essential for experiencing the fullness of life in Christ. He contrasts the old covenant's limitations with the new covenant's promise of internal transformation, urging listeners to judge themselves and seek a deeper walk with God. Ultimately, he affirms that a life of continuous growth in righteousness is not only possible but God's will for every believer.

Transcript

I'll preach this morning on the paths of the righteous.

As we read on Proverbs Chapter 4 and verse 18, Proverbs 4:18 says, "The paths of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day". The picture here is of sunrise when the darkness is over, the night is over, and the light gets brighter, and brighter, and brighter, and brighter as the sun ascends in the skies until it comes to that noon day position when it's the brightest. The book of Proverbs, I've often felt, is a New Testament book in the Old Testament. There's so many things in the book of Proverbs like, "God gives grace to the humble,". That's a New Testament thing found in the book of proverbs, and here is another one like that. This verse, I believe it was prophetic. No one in the Old Testament could live like this. Where they start a relationship with God like sunrise, and consistently, year by year, by year, their walk with God gets closer, [and] closer, brighter, [and] brighter, [and] brighter, [and] brighter. That was impossible in the Old Testament. The Old Testament experience of even the greatest men was up, and down, and up, and down.

You read of Job, the godliest man of his generation, and you read the first two chapters of Job, you see him way on the mountaintop. He's lost all of his property, all of his business, and ten of his children, and he says, "Praise the Lord"; He worships God. And then he loses his health and his wife turns against him

and he says, "Well, shouldn't we take bad things from God as well as good things?", and you think, "What a man this is!" And you go into chapter three and he's gone down already, and he says, "Why didn't I die at birth?". And as you read through the book of Job, you'll find [that] every now and then he comes up and says, "Well, even if he slays me, I'll trust him". And he's on the mountaintop again, and you read the next chapter, and he's down in the dumps, and he says, "God set me up as a target for all of his arrows,". And then he goes up again and says, "My redeemer lives! I know that one day, even if I die, I will rise and see Him face-to-face,". In the next chapter, he's down in the dumps again. That's how Job was, one of the godliest people in the Old Testament. And every one of those people in the Old Testament was like that.

Abraham had his moments where he manifested such tremendous faith, and when you read that here was a famine in the land, he lost that faith. And he went to Egypt without asking God, and there in Egypt, he got a hold of a servant woman called "Hagar," he came back, and that one single event has caused problems for four thousand years that's carried on even to what we are seeing today. It all started there; Abraham up, and down, and up, and down.

And so it was with Jacob and so it was with Moses who would manifest such tremendous faith and say, "Oh God, let me die rather than let these people suffer and be killed in the wilderness," and the next moment he would say, "Why in the world have You made me a leader if these terrible people?" and he would lose his temper and break the tablets of stone that God had given him.

Elijah was like that. One moment he was calling fire down from heaven, and then when this man who could confront eight hundred and fifty prophets confronted one woman who said "I'll take off your head", he got scared and ran for his life, and sat under a juniper tree and said, "Oh God, I've had enough. Take away my life. I want to die,". This was the great prophet Elijah!

John the Baptist, Jesus said he was the greatest prophet that ever lived right up to his time. The burning and a shining light who alone stood for God and turned many people to the Lord in Israel, and yet when he was in prison, and the Lord didn't seem to deliver him, this man who had heard a voice from above say, "This is my beloved Son," who had seen the dove descending to Jesus, sends a message to Jesus saying, "Are you really the one or is the messiah someone else? Do we have to wait for someone else?". You find all of these Old Testament people were like that. And yet, it says here the path of the righteous is not meant to be like that.

The sun doesn't go up and down in the sky after it rises. It's steady; it continues to go up. Now, the question is, is it possible for a Christian to be born again like the sunrise, and his life to be one continuous steady upward growth until the perfect day when Christ comes again and we'll be like him. Well, if you look at the word of God, you get one answer. If you look at your own experience, and the experience of most believers around you, you get another answer. And the question now is: Which are you going to believe?

You know, it says in Romans chapter 4 that Abraham looked at his body when God said you're going to have seed like the stars in the sky, and his body gave him one answer: "No. That's impossible,". He looked at Sarah's body, [and he got the] same answer: "Impossible". Then he says he looked at the promise of God, and the promise of God said something else. I want to show you that verse in Romans chapter 4, it's a tremendous verse. The Lord said to him in verse 17, "A father of many nations I have made you,". His name was Abram ("Exalted Father"), and one day the Lord said to him, "You've got to change your name to Abraham ("Father of a Multitude"). So he changed his name at a time when Isaac was not even born. He did not have a single son. And the Lord told him, "Your descendants are going to

be like the stars in the sky," in the last part of verse 18. And now listen to this, it says "He contemplated his own body: Dead, [then] Sarah's womb: Dead. We can look at, like I said earlier, our experience. The experience of others around us. And then he looked at the promise of God (verse 20). "He looked to the promise of God, and he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God," being absolutely convinced, fully assured that what God had promised (verse 21), He was able to perform.

So when you look at a word like this, "the path of the righteous", and we say we are righteous because Christ has come into our life, we are justified, declared righteous before God. The path God has marked out for you and me... Now, you've got to forget your experience like Abraham forgot about his own body. You've got to forget about Sarah and everybody else around you. It doesn't matter if their experience does not match what God says. The Bible says, "Let God be true, and every man a liar,". If God has said something, and nobody in the world has experienced it, is it possible for you to experience it? Yes. Maybe you're the first person who's going to experience it. But why didn't all of those other people experience it? They didn't believe it. God never, never, never fulfills His promise to someone who doesn't believe Him. If Abraham, when God had told him, "You're going to have seed like the stars in heaven and like the sand on the sea shore", [disbelieved,] and if he had always looked at his own ability, he'd have said, "Impossible,". He looked at Sarah's ability: Impossible. But do you know what the Bible says? It says "Abraham believed in the Lord", and that word "believe" is in the Hebrew the word, "Amen", from which we say "Amen". It's a Hebrew word, "Amen", which means "believe". But what it means is, when God told Abraham, "Look at the stars in the sky," and, "I'm going to give you seed like that," and he didn't have even one, and when he looked at the deadness of his body, [and] he deadness of Sarah's womb, and he said, "Amen," It shall be so: that's the meaning of Amen. "It shall be so". And Abraham said, "It shall be so,". Why? Because God said it.

Now, I've discovered in almost every place I've gone, that there are very, very few people, even among believers, who will say, "Amen" to what God has says. They say it in the meeting, but they don't say it in their lives day by day. They look at their own ability and say, "Do I think I can live like this?" like Abraham looking at his own body and thinking, "Do I think I can manage this or not? Impossible,".

Do you remember when the angel Gabriel came to Mary and said, you're going to have a child, and she said, "How will this be? This is impossible,"? It was more impossible than for Abraham to have a child. For Mary to have a child was much more impossible, it had never happened to anybody in the history of the world. Where has it ever been heard? Impossible. And you know what? Gabriel told her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you...," and it would not be impossible. That's the answer. You read that in Chapter 1.

We haven't ordered the Holy Spirit in us. We depend too much on our own ability. We depend on our study of the word and all of the techniques and all of the ways in which we think we can become better Christians, and we don't understand that the answer lies in the Holy Spirit. If Mary had tried without the Holy Spirit to have a child as a virgin, do you think she would have managed it by gritting her teeth, determining, positive thinking, possibility thinking, all of these things? You know, closing her eyes and envisioning, "I have become pregnant", all of this New Age teaching, it's all a deception. Gabriel said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you"...and then something will happen. But it's never happened before! Never mind if it's never happened before, it's going to happen to you. And do you know what the Word of God says there in Luke Chapter 1? There's a word there which I don't know whether you've noticed. When Mary went to Elizabeth's house, Elizabeth said, (verse 45) "Blessed is she who believed, and there will be a fulfillment of what has been spoken to her by the Lord,". Mary believed what the angel Gabriel said. That even if no one in the world has experienced it, I'm going to experience it, and I'm going to be the first

person. Ok, so many of you look at your past life, and it's like that Old Testament experience of all of those great men on the Old Testament from Job to John the Baptist. Every single one. And then you look at the promise of God. The path of the righteous was to be like the sunrise, like the sun ascends in the sky [and] it gets brighter, and brighter, and brighter and brighter, and brighter. There is no up and down experience, that's Old covenant! It's going to be brighter, and brighter, and brighter, and closer, and a closer walk with God, and more and more victory over sin, more and more Christ like, until one day we are made perfect when he comes again. That, whether you experience it or not, whether you believe it or not, is the will of God for you.

Now whether you ever experience in your life, I don't know whether it's going to take place. That depends on your faith. If you don't believe, if Mary said, "Well, that's impossible. Forget it. This is all a joke," you know what Gabriel would have said? "Well, I'll go back and tell God that. God may pick another girl. Sorry, you missed it. You were God's first choice, but you wouldn't believe. You looked around to see if anyone else had that experience, and you didn't find anybody. Even if God said you are the chosen one; you're going to have this. You wouldn't believe it. Ok, well, God's not going to force you,". God would never do anything for a man who doesn't believe him. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. You can go to ten thousand Bible schools, and get all of your books full of notes, and your head full of knowledge, but if you don't have faith, it is impossible to please God. You can understand all of the techniques and theories of sanctification and holiness in the world, but if you don't have faith, it is impossible to please God. And faith means what? Just believing that what God has said, He means it, that if that is what God says, it is His will for me.

Do you know that the Lord told through Moses to all of the elders of Israel in Egypt (You read it in Exodus chapter 3)? "I'm going to take all of you out of Egypt, and into Canaan,". And do you know they only experienced half of that promise? They came out of Egypt. Why? Because they believed that part. God told Moses to tell them, "Put the blood outside your door", they did that in faith. Some people didn't do it and their eldest children got killed. But the ones who did it, they escaped and they came out of Egypt. But then, the second part of that promise, "I will take you into Canaan,". God brought them to the borders of the Promised Land and said, "Now go in," they looked at the giants and said, "We can't do it". God said, "Ok, you'll never go in,". But didn't God promise them way back there, "I'll take you in,"? Do you think God's promises are fulfilled automatically? They are not. There is a case of what God promised them that was not fulfilled in their life because they did not believe.

See what it says in Hebrews Chapter 4. It's referring to that particular time, here, where they came to the borders of the Promised Land and, it says here these people did not enter in. Chapter 3, verse 19: "They were not able to enter in because of their unbelief therefore let us fear lest God has given us a promise of entering into His rest, that any of you...." Now, remember, he's talking to believers. He's not talking to unconverted people. He's talking in chapter 3, verse 1 to holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Are you a holy brother? A partaker of the heavenly calling? Shall I give you a word from the Lord? Holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, "...fear, lest any of you....," (Chapter 4, verse 1), "... should come short of that life of rest which God has promised all of His children....," (Because you don't believe it), "...for indeed....," (verse 2) "...we have the gospel preached to us just as they had it preached to them. But the word that they heard....". What's the word that you heard today? The path of the righteous, it's like the shining light, shining brighter and brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. "...the word they heard did not profit them because it was not united with faith". There was not faith in that word. So, they wandered up and down, and up, and down in the wilderness for thirty eight years. It was an up and down experience,

and that is the experience of the vast majority of believers. If you want to know the proportion, do you know how many men stood at the borders that time? Six hundred thousand. And do you know how many entered in? Two. Two out of six hundred thousand. Is it possible that only two people are right, and that five hundred and ninety nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety eight people are wrong? They were. But those people oh, they just couldn't believe it. They said, "It can't be that two people are right! They've got something wrong,". In fact, they wanted to stone them to death.

So today, out of six hundred thousand believers, born again believers who live with this up and down experience, defeated, defeated, defeated, in the midst of them, two people say, "That is not the way God wants us to live, and that's not the way I'm living," and people say, "You're a liar. It can't be true!" They believe their own defeated experience more than the word of God. And God says, "Ok, according to your faith, be it unto you. All of you are doomed to live this up and down, depressed, gloomy life, [with] bad moods, and good moods, all of your life. You don't believe my promise? You're going to live like that for the rest of your life,". Terrible. Think of the regret in eternity when you discover that those two people were right. And the only difference between you and them was that they believed. They were probably filthier than you in their background. Maybe they were more defeated by sin than you, but they believed the promise of God. They believed that what God had said, He would do, that if God said He would put his laws into my mind through the Holy Spirit, He would do it. That's the new covenant: That God would write His laws in my heart. He would do it.

Turn to Hebrews in Chapter 8. Do you remember the old covenant? The Ten Commandments? You can find them in Exodus 20 when you have time, if you're not familiar with them. The Ten Commandments can basically be summed up in two phrases: "thou shalt", [and] "thou shalt not", that's all. Every commandment is "thou shalt", [and] "thou shalt not". "Thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, though shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt," and that's the Ten Commandments. And here it says in Hebrews 8, verse seven, "God found fault with that covenant. If it had been faultless, He would not have sought for a second, but He finds fault with it," (verse 8). It's not because God made a mistake, God doesn't make mistakes. He gave them that covenant to show them, "You can never make it. You can try if you want. And they tried for fifteen hundred years and they failed. "He finds fault with it and He says now I will make a new covenant. Not like that covenant," (verse 9), "this is the covenant," (verse 10) "I will make,". Now listen, you compare Exodus Chapter 20 with Hebrews 8 verses 10 to 12. That's the old covenant, this is the new covenant, and I'll tell you something, most believers you have met in your life don't have a clue about the new covenant. They are living in the old covenant with rules of "thou shalt not do this, and thou shalt do that, and thou shalt not do the other thing, and you're not supposed to dress like this, and you're not supposed to have this in your house, and you're not supposed to do this, and you must do this, and you must go here," with then thousand rules, and it has an appearance of Godliness, but it hasn't been written on the heart. It hasn't been put into the mind. It's like getting a whole lot of people dressed in an army parade in the same uniform, and standing in the same line. It looks nice, but it hasn't the mind. That's how it is in so many churches. And if you were to ask these people, "What's your personal experience? In your thought life? Although you look so nice when you come there on Sunday mornings to the meeting,". They're honest and say, "Pretty frustrating. I'm defeated, but I dare not admit it. I've got to put up a show of appearing to be holy and happy worshipping the Lord, because everyone around me is also putting up a show. Is that God's will? That's hypocrisy!

Is Christianity real? Does this really work? Does it really work in the inner life twenty four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year? If not, it's not worth giving to anybody else. Would you give to

give a gift to someone of some electronic gadget or a CD player or something that doesn't work? No. You wouldn't sell it, you wouldn't even give it as a gift. How can you pass on a gospel to other people that hasn't worked in your life first?

See what it says in Hebrews 8, and notice in verses 10 to 12 what this is. This is the covenant. "I will put my laws into their minds, I will write it in their heart I will be their God, " (verse 11) "I will be merciful to their iniquities, I will remember their sins no more,". Do you see the contrast? What was the old covenant? "thou shalt, thou shalt not," and here it is, "I will, I will, I will, I will, I will, I will,". Do you see a fundamental difference between the old covenant and new covenant?

What a lot of preaching you hear on what you're supposed to do, and what you're not supposed to do, and I agree with all of that. I believe there's a place for that. But if you try to do things before God has begun that work in your heart, you're going to be a failure. If Abraham tried to have a child without God's promise it would not work, it would be like an Ishmael. And that Ishmael, God said "I reject him". The production of Ishmael was not a human impossibility. Abraham was not impotent. Hagar was very fertile, so what's the great thing if Abraham and Hagar have a child? That happened all the time everywhere! That's normal! But when Abraham and Sarah had a child, by that time Abraham was a hundred, he had become impotent. He was incapable of producing a child! And Sarah was dead [in the womb] for so many years. That was a supernatural work of God.

Abraham got the glory for this handsome looking Ishmael , but when Isaac was born, God got the glory, and there's a lot of difference between the two. There is a life you can live by gritting your teeth, and determination, and discipline, and conditioning your mind psychologically and all of that, and come to a fairly good Christian life, and you get the glory, you're such a saintly person. But there's another life where God gets the glory because you are incapable of living that life, and through the Holy Spirit. Just like Mary [who was] incapable of producing a child as a virgin, the Holy Spirit comes upon her, and she does what is humanly speaking, impossible. Abraham and Sarah had a child which is, humanly speaking, impossible. And you, when the Holy Spirit fills your life, and puts it's laws in your mind and writes them into your heart, you begin to live a life which is, humanly speaking, impossible! You never have a bad mood three hundred and sixty five days a year, is that, humanly speaking, possible? Impossible. The things which are impossible with men are impossible with God. Imagine a husband and wife who live together and never have a bad mood one single day of the year. What a life that can be, where you never once lose your temper at your wife, no matter what happens, three hundred and sixty five days of the year! Well, you say, "Impossible,". According to your faith, be it unto you. But if you say, "Well, I look at myself and say 'it's impossible, I've tried', but I look at the promise of God" what is impossible with men is possible with God.

I want to tell you, brothers and sisters, it's got nothing to do with your age. It's got to do with faith, not with your age. You don't have to wait twenty five, thirty years of being a believer before you come to this life. There are people who have been believers for fifty years who haven't come to this life, but you can come to it now if you have faith, if you believe what God says is true. That is God's will. For example, let me show you another verse, in 1st John Chapter 2, in verse 6 it says, "The one who says he abides in Christ ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked,". Possible, or not possible? Well, it depends where you look. It's like Mary getting a word from God saying, "You are a virgin, but you are going to have a child,". Humanly speaking? Impossible. But if God has said it, and the Holy Spirit comes upon her, easy. Look at this verse like that. You say you abide in Christ? You are to talk in the same manner by the same principles that govern the life of Jesus everyday. You say, "What a strain to live like that". Humanly speaking, yes, impossible. Is that the word of God? Does He tease us? Does he tell us to take something

which is not going to give to us? Is he teasing us like you know sometimes children say, "take this", and as the [other] child draws their hand, they pull it away. Is God like that, where we reach for something and he pulls it further and further away? Is God like that?

Do you know what a lot we have missed in our life because we started our Christian life by faith knowing our works would not save us, but later on, we try to perfect by the flesh what was started in the spirit? And we've got a hold in this, which comes to a lot of struggle when God has not written his laws in our heart and mind. We are avoiding sin, but we don't hate sin. You know, it says about Jesus that he hated sin, and there's a lot of difference between hating sin, and avoiding sin. You can avoid sin, and have an appearance of holiness. Another person avoids the same sin because he hates it, a change of nature. And it's a fundamental difference between these two people, even though on the outside they look the same because they're both avoiding the same sin. Two people in the same church, avoiding the same dirty thing, and these two people may be in two different realms altogether. One's avoiding it, and one's hating it. One hates it because God has written his laws into that person's nature. He doesn't just avoid it, he hates it. And it says about Jesus that, "He loved righteousness". Now, you can do righteousness, and love righteousness. They're two different things. Here are two brothers, or two sisters in a church, they do what is right. One does it, the other loves it, and they are in two altogether different realms, because the Holy Spirit has worked in that one person's heart, writing that law inside that person. In the other person, the person is just conforming to a particular form that they've been taught in the church.

It's like the brother who came into one of our churches. He is in our church now. He was a Hindu, and he said, "I had victory over anger long before I became a Christian. I did yoga, meditation, control of my passions, though mind control, self control." And they do it. Buddha, he was a religious leader who lived a thousand years before Christ. A person came to irritate him and Buddha said, "You've come ten years too late. You can't irritate me now. I have attained...", they call it "Nirvana". He has attained an enlightened state where he can't lose his temper now. You know, it's possible to do these things through mind control, [and] through discipline. Some people have more ability in that than others, and this is the Christianity of many people. It's religiosity, not spirituality. It's something done on the outside. It's not something that comes out of nature, it's not something you love to do.

Let me turn you to Second Peter Chapter 1. We know that the Bible is full of wonderful promises, precious, magnificent promises. In this Book of wonderful promises, can you tell what is the greatest promise of all? The greatest, the absolute number one promise? It says here in Second Peter 1:4, "By these God has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises," and he says the ultimate goal of all of these promises is, "that you might become partakers of the divine nature". Do you know that is the greatest promise in the Bible, that God can make you partake of His nature? His own nature. And thus, you escape the corruption that is in the world by lust. There are two ways in which we can avoid the corruption in the world by lust. The world is corrupt because of lust, and if I want to escape it, there are two ways to. One is by gritting my teeth and determining "I'm not going to have anything to do with that", and the other is by partaking of God's nature, where I hate sin, and I love righteousness.

You know, the fullness of the Holy Spirit is not a static experience. It's something that grows. Jesus Spoke in John Chapter 3 about being born of water when he spoke to Nicodemus. You know the Psalm that says, "I will take the cup of salvation"? That's a cup of water in John Chapter 3. And then further in John Chapter 4, He spoke to the Samaritan woman of a well of water. This is more than a cup. A cup, you drink a little water, and you dry up pretty soon. But a well is much better than that. You can have a continuous supply of joy or peace, or whatever. And then, Jesus in John Chapter 7, verse 38, He went one step

further and spoke about rivers of living water. So, what do you see here? Water, it's always water. Water is the picture of the Holy Spirit. You're born again, born of water, and you move to a deeper realm of wells of water, and wells of water. It's a capacity that's increasing. So, a newborn believer can be filled with the Holy Spirit right there, but you can fill a cup only so much. The apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit at the end of his life, well that was rivers!

So, it's not just that I'm filled with the Holy Spirit once and that's it. God wants to increase my capacity as I take up the cross everyday. That's the way to increase the capacity. If you want your spiritual capacity to increase, let me show you the way. Take up the cross every day. You know what the cross is? Where you will crosses God's will. That's the cross. You want to go one way, and you know God wants you to go another way, and you die there, your will. You say, "Lord, I choose to go your way". You know what's going to happen? Someone treats you badly, and you know here's a certain way you want to react, and you die to that, and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit that leads you to react another way. Something is going to happen to your capacity. You're not going to be like a little cup anymore, you're going to be like a bucket. And [if] you keep choosing that day by day, by day, by day, things are going to happen, and you'll want to be filled again. And do you know the difference between a cup that is full and a bucket that's full? There's a lot of difference. And that is God's will for you: the path of the righteous [to grow], brighter, brighter, brighter, [and] brighter, to walk as Jesus walked.

Let me show you another verse in Hebrews chapter 12. Now the reason why I'm showing you so many scriptures is for the same reason Paul said, "that your faith may not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God". Faith can not come into your heart by my persuasive preaching. I can be a great orator, persuade you about this, that and the other. That's like giving people a pep talk. When people go out to play a baseball game, the coach gives them a pep talk, and a lot of Christian preachers give pep talks. I'm not interested in that. Paul was not interested in it. He wanted their faith to rest on the power of God and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Your faith can only grow if you find God has promised it. A pep talk is like an injection: the effect of it wears out after a while.

See what it says here in Hebrews Chapter 12, "therefore, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, there are so many godly men who have gone ahead of us...", and they're all listed in Chapter 11. But, you know it says in Chapter 11 verse 20, (have you ever read this verse?) "God has provided something better for us". Something better than what all of these people listed in Chapter 11 got. These were wonderful men, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, [and] Samuel, all of these people listed were wonderful, godly men. You can include John the Baptist there, too. But God has provided something better for us, now. You know what that is? We can say Hebrews 11 goes like this, "By faith, Abel. By faith, Enoch. By faith, Noah. By faith, Abraham. By faith, Sarah. By faith, Isaac. By faith, Jacob. By faith, Joseph. By faith, Moses". By faith all of these other people, and so on. You know what it says in Chapter 12? "By faith, Jesus". What did Jesus do? "By faith". That is the better thing provided for us. He didn't pull down the walls of Jericho, He didn't split open the Red Sea, He didn't shut the mouths of lions, [and] He didn't turn the armies of the enemy to flight. What did he do for us, by faith? He endured the cross, (Verse 2) "Despising the shame of people", and did the will of God. Whenever His will crossed the will of God, He did the will of his Father, and He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

And now He tells us, "Overcome, as I overcame, so that you can sit with me on my throne. And therefore he says, "Let us run this race," (Chapter 12 verse 1), "looking unto Jesus". That is the secret. If you look at Elijah, you will find some comfort when you are discouraged, and say, "Well, even Elijah was discouraged, so it's ok.", because you are running the race looking unto Elijah. When you lose faith, you can say, "Well,

John the Baptist also lost a little faith when he was in prison". You're running the race looking unto John the Baptist. When you lose your temper and break something in the house, you can say, "Well, even Moses did that on the mount when he broke those tablets of stone". You're running the race looking unto Moses. You know, you can even fall into adultery like some preachers do, and get up on the television and say, "Well, David also fell, and God restored him". You're running the race looking unto David. But it says God has provided something better. We run the race now looking at David, not looking at Moses, even though they were wonderful men, [but] looking unto Jesus. Where did He get upset and break something? Where did He get depressed and sit under a juniper tree and said, "Oh Father, take away my life."? When was Jesus in a bad mood. When was Jesus upset because somebody disturbed His daily plan? No. Don't ever find comfort in the Old Testament saints or some of those New Testament saints around you, who are living an old covenant life. Look unto Jesus. You say, "Well, I don't see anyone around me living like that". Never mind, like Mary, you be the first one. Why not? The only thing that matters is that "has God said it?". If God hasn't said it, forget it, but don't try to claim things which you may like to have which God hasn't said.

I got a cold a couple of days ago because I don't have hair on my head and I went out for a walk. I would really like hair on my head, and I can't visualize it and get it tomorrow morning. I can pray as much as I like and I won't get it. I'll get it one day when Jesus comes again, [but] not before that. There are things God has not promised. I don't waste my time trying to claim it. There are people today telling you to claim houses and cars and this and that, and get teeth filled and all kinds of things, well, I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in what God has promised. God has promised that my life can be like that rising sun, without any backsliding, steadily growing brighter, brighter, [and] brighter. God has promised it in His word, challenged me to walk as Jesus walked, to run the race setting aside every sin and every weight, and running this race until the very end, and I believe that's possible.

Think of the testimony of the apostle Paul. We looked at the life of the apostle Paul the other day. If God had given us the example of Jesus, that would have been enough, but He's also given us the testimony of Paul, for the people who are weak in faith, who say, "Well, it's not possible," and God says "I'll show you someone at your level: Paul. Do you believe he was like you? Ok, see how he lived. You can't believe that Jesus was like you, even though the Bible says He was made in all things like His brothers". Let me show you what Paul says in 1st Corinthians 4, verse 4, "I am conscious of nothing against myself", that was his testimony day after day. "I am conscious of nothing against myself". "I'm not consciously disobeying God in any area of my life". But, he says "unconsciously", of course. There may be so many areas in me which are unchrist-like. That's why he says, "that doesn't mean I'm acquitted because the Lord examines me, and he says a whole lot of areas in my life I don't see". But conscious, what I'm aware of. And the wonderful thing is God doesn't hold you responsible for the things you aren't aware of, but what you're aware of. Can you say, "I, at this very moment, am conscious of nothing against myself. If the Lord calls me home right now, I'm ready to go"? That's how we should be living every moment of every day, and that's not a strain, that's a restful life. It's a life of rest.

Let me show you another verse: Second Corinthians Chapter 2, verse 14. "Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ". Always in triumph in Christ, that was his testimony. It may be only two people out of six hundred thousand, but those two manifest what is possible by the grace of God. God will never call us to do something which He does not give us the grace to do. You must believe that. I have believed that for a number of years in my life, that God will never, never ask me to do something without giving me the grace to do it. God will not ask Abraham and Sarah to have a child without doing something

supernatural in their bodies so that they can have a child. God will not ask Mary to produce a child as a virgin without doing something supernatural in her body by the Holy Spirit, and that's consistent. God did not ask Paul to live that life without filling him with the Holy Spirit and writing His law in Paul's heart. And I want you tell you the same thing. God will not ask you do anything which He will not give you the grace, writing His law in your heart so that you can live that life. For example, do you know there's a command which says, "Rejoice in the Lord always". Have you ever, ever, ever taken that command seriously? You take a command like "be dressed modestly always" seriously. That's good, the Bible says that also. Are you dressed modestly once in a while, most of the time, or always? Are you dressed modestly when other believers in the church can see you, or are you dressed modestly whether other people can see you or not? Ok. What about rejoice in the Lord? Always? Is it meant to be once in a while? Sometimes? When people see us? Give people the impression that you are rejoicing in the Lord? Or is it "whether people see me or not"? Rejoice in the Lord always. Be anxious for nothing.

I'll take another verse: Ephesians 4, verse 31. It says here about not grieving the Holy Spirit in verse 30, and then it says, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, be put away from you along with all malice. What do I have to put away from me? All bitterness. Can all you sitting in this room here today say that you've done that? God doesn't give us suggestions in scripture, He gives us commands. At this very moment, there should not be the slightest bit of bitterness in your heart against a single human being. If you're not like that, I want to say you're not living in the will of God. I don't care how modest your dress is, I don't care how loudly you sing, you're not living in the will of God. A lot of people who look very Holy on the outside, they haven't given up the habit of gossiping and evil speaking. The Bible says, "speak evil of no man". You can disagree with them, you can disagree with their methods and say so, but don't speak evil of any man. If we would take these commands seriously, we'd really come need in our life, and we wouldn't have so much time to find fault with other people. We would become poor in spirit, we would see our own need and be crying out to God and saying "Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit, and write your laws in my heart". It doesn't happen all of a sudden. I remember when God baptized me in the Holy Spirit and the next morning, I was wondering, "Was it real? Is it really from God, or was I imagining?". The Lord spoke to my heart with the example of the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary and said to me that, "Like the Holy Spirit came upon Mary to produce Jesus in her, a body for Jesus, The Holy Spirit would come upon me, to produce Jesus in me. And like the growth of the body in Mary's womb was gradual, slowly, slowly, slowly, over a period of months, that the transformation in my life would also be gradual, but it would be all the work of the Holy Spirit". But the Holy Spirit needed a submitted vessel in Mary. He couldn't do it by himself, and the Holy Spirit needed a submitted vessel in me day by day. And that's what God wants to do with you. And just like Mary, when she became pregnant, you'll be misunderstood and criticized by other people who did not now that type of life in the Spirit. The Lord said to me, "People who don't know this life in the Spirit will misunderstand you, and criticize you. Never mind, just leave them alone". Mary didn't bother about that. She was willing to face all of that, and Jesus came forth finally out of her body. And one say, I would be made like Christ completely. I was so encouraged by that, and I want to share that with you.

The only thing God requires from you is the submission of faith. "Lord, I believe". You know what Mary said? "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word". That's all: submission. That's what Abraham said, "Amen. You said it, Lord. It doesn't matter if I've experienced that till today in my life. It doesn't matter if Sarah has never experienced that till today in her life. Today I'm going to trust". And there began something new, when they began to trust God. Everything depends on faith thank God for all the other things we hear, but it's faith that must be underneath. God can do it in my

life. I am absolutely convinced that what He has promised, He can do.

Let me turn you to Romans Chapter 3.

For many, many years, I tried to get the perfect definition of sin from the Bible. There are many definitions of sin. In 1st John 3 it says, "all unrighteousness is sin". "Sin is lawlessness". [In] James 4 we read, "to him that knows to do good, and does not do it, it is sin". But I found the perfect definition of sin here in Romans Chapter 3 and verse 23. what is sin? Is it dressing in an immodest way? Is it speaking in foul language? Is it watching filthy movies on television? Listening to bad music? What is sin? We need to get that clear. If we have a low definition of sin, we have a low level of holiness. The level of your holiness is dependant on your definition of sin. Remember that. The higher your definition of sin, the higher your experience of holiness will be. What is sin? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God". Anything that comes short of the glory of God is sin. And you combine that with the other verse in John 1 which says "the glory of God was manifested in Jesus, full of grace of Jesus". So, the glory of God is seen in a person, in Jesus. It's not some abstract, invisible thing. It's very visible in Christ. So, we can say anything unchrist-like is sin. That is the definition of sin from Romans 3:23, and John 1:14. Anything unchrist-like is sin. Anything in your life that is unchrist-like - that's sin. And when I see that sin, I've got to hate it, I've got to repent of it, I've got to turn from it, and say "Lord, I don't want that. Give me grace to overcome that in my life. It's not enough to speak the truth.

The Bible says we must speak the truth in love. You speak the truth and it can be unchrist-like because it's not spoken in love. You can speak the truth to your wife, you husband, your parents, and I may still be sin because it was not spoken in love. And when we see that, we've got to repent and say, "Lord, that was unchrist-like". We've got to and apologize to whom we spoke like that, judge ourselves, cleanse yourself from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and God sees that this person is serious about being Christ-like. And He'll do a work in your heart. He'll write a little more of those laws in your heart, and you'll find the sun rises a little more in your sky, and it gets a little brighter, and the path of the righteous gets a little brighter. And when things get brighter, it's like, "Hey! I understand the meaning of that verse, now!" because you've got a little more light. Everything becomes brighter. More light on the word of God, more light in your life, more light in your service for others. That is the path of the righteous.

One last verse. I love this verse in 1st Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 31. It says, "If we judge ourselves rightly, we should not be judged". Very few Christians have a regular habit of judging themselves. I want to encourage you to develop it. 1st Peter 4:17 says "The time has come for judgment to begin in the household of God, and it must begin with us first. That means we must judging ourselves. We spend all of our life judging other people, and now we're going to stop that and we're going to start judging ourselves. What do I judge myself in? I ask God to show me anything in my life that's making Him sad, anything that's unchrist-like, and I judge myself there in my service for the Lord. There's hardly a sermon I've preached in my life where I haven't gone back to my room and judged myself, and said "Lord, did I speak as you wanted me to speak? Did I say anything unnessescary? Did I crack a joke that was unnecessary? Did I speak with compassion? Was I throwing stones or feeding people? Was I too long? Was I boring people? I tell you, if all of the preachers started doing that, we'd have a lot better messages every time we hear them. You try doing that, that you go home and ask God to judge you. The way you talk to other people, the way you talk to your wife during the day or your husband, was that respectful? The way I spoke even to a younger brother? Ok, maybe I have to correct him in something, [but] did I speak respectfully to him? The Bible says, "Honor all men". I'm supposed to honor all men. We get so much light if we judge ourselves.

What does this mean, "If we judge ourselves rightly, we won't be judged"? I think of it like this: In the final day, Jesus is going to set up his judgment seat and He's going to call us up one by one. That's real, it is not imagination. It's going to happen one day when Christ comes. He's going to set up His judgment seat, and the Bible says believers are going to be judged for the way they lived on Earth, and [I] think one by one, a person is called and He tells them all the things that remain unjudged in their life. Because of which, they're going to lose so much reward, and so much of what God wanted to give them in all eternity. They're going to lose, and then one by one, my turn comes. And I stand before the Lord, and the Lord looks at the book, and he says, "Nothing, you can go". Boy, can you imagine how I will feel that day?! "If we judge ourselves rightly now, we will not be judged in that way". I want that.

Whatever you don't judge in yourself today, whatever you keep blaming on other people, "he did that, and this is the reason," like Adam blamed his wife, you'll be judged for in the final day. But whatever you judge yourself and cleanse yourself from, imagine that you can live such a life on this earth that one day when you stand before the Lord, and your turn comes, the Lord says, "Nothing. You can have a full reward. Come, you blessed of the Lord. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world. I prepared this Kingdom before the foundation of the world for people like you who live faithfully on Earth. I tell you, all the suffering of Earth will disappear in that moment when He says, "Well done, good and faithful servant". You want to be that, you young people? I told you at the beginning, it's got nothing to do with age, it's got to do with whether you believe God's word or not. I want to tell you, it's the truth, for a number of years now, God's given me the grace to experience this life. I say that not to boast but to encourage you to believe it is possible. It is possible to live a life where you are free from bad moods, where you are free from losing your temper, where you are quick to humble yourself, quick to apologize, quick to judge yourself, walking in humility, receiving the grace of God day by day, by day, by day, and where the rivers keep flowing from your life day by day, by day, by day. It's possible, believe it, and let your life change from today.

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