

(Secrets of Victory) 2. the Absolute Necessity of Faith

by Zac Poonen

Faith is the key to living a life of victory over sin, and unbelief is the root cause of all other sins.

Scripture: Matthew 13:58, Mark 6:5, Mark 11:24, Romans 6:14, Romans 10:10, Hebrews 3:12, Hebrews 4:15, 1 John 2:6, Revelation 12:11

Topics: "Faith", "Victory Over Sin"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the absolute necessity of faith in achieving victory over sin, drawing from 1 John 2:6, which calls believers to walk as Jesus did--without sin. He highlights that Jesus, despite being tempted, never sinned, and challenges the notion that God would ask us to do the impossible. Poonen warns against the dangers of unbelief, which can limit God's work in our lives, as illustrated by the miracles Jesus could not perform due to the unbelief of the people in His hometown. He encourages believers to cultivate a childlike faith, confess their belief in God's promises, and understand that victory over sin is attainable through grace. Ultimately, Poonen reassures that God desires to set us free, but we must first believe in His power to do so.

Transcript

1 John 2:6 says, "The one who says he abides in Christ ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked".

How did Jesus walk? Was it in victory some of the time, or most of the time or all the time? We know the answer. He was tempted in all points as we are, but He never sinned.

We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

We are now told to walk even as He walked. Is that possible here on earth? Would God tell us to do something that He knows very well we cannot do? No. That is unimaginable. Even earthly fathers do not make unreasonable demands on their children. How much less God!

Some of the saddest words written in the New Testament are found in Matthew 13:58 - "He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief".

The parallel passage in Mark 6:5 states, "He could not do any miracle there".

He had wanted to do great things for those people in His home-town. They needed those miracles too. But He was limited by their unbelief.

Unbelief ties the hands of Almighty God so that He cannot do for us the things that He wants to.

I wonder if there have been miracles that God had wanted to do for you, but which He could not do, because of your unbelief. At the judgement-seat of Christ, will any of us have to hear these words, "I could not do all that I wanted for you and through you, because of your unbelief?" What regret there will be in our hearts if we discover that, at the end of our earthly life! It is good to think about it now.

My early years as a born-again Christian were spent among a group of assemblies that majored on the study of the Scriptures. I am, in one sense, thankful to God for this, for it enabled me to have a good basic knowledge of the Scriptures. But their study was mostly through human reason, without the revelation of the Holy Spirit. We studied the Bible like students study chemistry in school. We discovered the meanings of the Old Testament types etc., but we were still defeated by sin in our lives. I knew that God had forgiven my sins; but I didn't have faith for anything more.

When I saw the truth of the baptism in the Spirit in the Word and began to seek God for it, I found that I just couldn't believe. I fasted and prayed and was willing to pay any price for it, but I found it extremely difficult to believe that God had heard my request and granted it. Jesus taught that whenever we prayed we were to believe that we had already received what we had asked for.

I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you" (Mark 11:24).

It took me a long time - many years - to come to simple, childlike faith in that statement. Finally, by God's grace, I did break through to believe that God had heard my prayer and granted it. I was baptized in the Spirit, by faith. The gift of tongues that unexpectedly followed, was then only a confirmation of what I had already received by faith.

As I look back now over those years of struggling, I see clearly that what hindered me was unbelief.

The same principle applies in entering into a life of victory over sin. We can fast and pray and thirst - and still never get anywhere - until we believe that God can and will lead us into such a life. Satan knows that you can't get anything from God except through faith. So you can imagine how he will try to fill your heart with unbelief. Unbelief is a greater danger than lying or adultery, for these latter are easily recognized as sins, whereas unbelief isn't.

Hebrews 3:12 says,

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.

An evil heart of unbelief can cause us to fall away from God. Unbelief is the root cause of all the other sins - as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

Romans 6:14 states,

Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

There the Holy Spirit tells us very plainly that if we are under grace, sin cannot have dominion over us. That is so plainly written that even a child can understand it. In spite of that, many believers still do not believe in the possibility of living a life of victory over sin.

God wants you to live in victory. It doesn't matter how dirty your thought-life is, or how long you have been defeated by anger. The Lord can set you completely free and give you a pure heart. But He can't do it for you until you believe.

The Bible says that what we believe in our heart, we must confess with our mouth. Romans 10:10 states, "With the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation".

This is an important principle - for it is through the confession of our mouth that we give expression to our faith. This in turn leads to deliverance from sin's power. And so we must speak the word of our testimony to Satan, saying, "I believe that God is going to lead me into a life of victory over sin."

They overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death." (Revelation 12:11).

Keep making that confession, each time you fall, until victory becomes a reality in your life. Don't be discouraged if it doesn't come overnight. God will surely honour the confession of your mouth. You too can overcome Satan.

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