

# The Balance of Scripture

by Zac Poonen

---

*The balance of scripture reveals that salvation is a balance of both God's part and man's part, and that we must take hold of eternal life and fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions to experience the transformative power of God's presence.*

**Duration:** 24:37

**Scripture:** John 7:37, Romans 6:23, Philippians 2:12

**Topics:** "Salvation Balance", "Eternal Life"

---

## Description

This sermon emphasizes the balance between man's part and God's part in salvation, highlighting the need to understand both aspects in Scripture. It discusses the concept of eternal life as a gift from God, the importance of being free from sin and becoming slaves to God for sanctification, and the continuous process of growing towards eternal life. The message challenges the idea of solely relying on good works for salvation and stresses the necessity of thirsting for the Holy Spirit to experience divine life.

---

## Transcript

Through 20 centuries, this is one of the great discussions among Bible scholars and divisions come among Christianity because some emphasize man's part and some say, no, it is God who does it. But if you read the New Testament with an open mind, you will see there is man's part and God's part as well. And if you read it carefully, sometimes it's very closely put together.

I'll show you just two examples. A very well-known verse is the gift of God is eternal life. You know where it is? Romans 6, 23.

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. A gift is something you don't pay for. If you pay for it, it's not a gift.

If you do one good work for it, it's not a gift. The gift of God is eternal life. That is God's part.

But we must get out of this habit of reading individual verses. We must read scripture in its context. So, let's start with Romans 6, 22 and see how to get eternal life from Romans 6, 22.

We saw it in 6, 23 that it's a gift. How to get eternal life from Romans 6, 22? First step, to be free from sin. That's what you see there.

Free from sin. We've confessed it. We've cleansed ourselves.

And become slaves to God. Lord, now onwards, I'm your slave. Not a servant who gets a salary, a slave.

And then I get the benefit or the fruit from that dedication to God. What is that? Sanctification. Sanctification is the more and more, it's not in a moment, it's little by little, continuous sanctification like the clean water filling the cup.

And at the end of it, eternal life. So is it a gift or not? And we think it is our work and then immediately to correct it, the Holy Spirit says, I don't think it's your work. The gift of God is eternal life.

That is the balance of scripture. It's man's part plus God's part. It's not his alone.

It's not ours alone. If it is his alone, we'd be robots. If it's ours alone, we'd be like people under the law, struggling, struggling, struggling, never achieving.

And at the end of it all saying, oh, wretched man that I am. Thank God for the balance of scripture. That when I've done my part, then the Lord says, I'll turn it into wine, or I'll show you another verse.

It's all over scripture, but the devil blinds our eyes and we have all these Bible scholars arguing away in one type of Calvinist saying this and Armenian saying this. The blessing we have is that none of us went to a Bible school, including me. That is our salvation.

I remember preaching in a seminary and the leader there said, Brother Zach, please don't tell these people that you never went to Bible school because they'll all leave and go. Philippians 2, verse 12, so then my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Whose work is that? You work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

What a verse. What a lot I have to do. But it doesn't stop there.

It says because, for means because, it is God who is at work inside you to make you desire and do His will. So tell me after reading those two verses, whose part is it? Is it God's part or is it our part? This is the fundamental problem. You know, we have such, particularly clever people have a big problem with this.

Simple people just accept it easily. The uneducated, simple people like fishermen, like Peter and others and some in our villages in Tamil Nadu, they just accept it. They have no complication.

But the scholars, the people who got degrees and postgraduate degrees, they begin to argue and all that. It's God working inside me, verse 13, and me working it out. If it is entirely God's part, you know what the result would have been? Every single one of us would have been perfectly like Christ the day we were born again.

Does God take such a long time to make a person Christ-like if it is entirely His part? Why is it all of us are at different spiritual levels? Is it because God loves some people more than others? Not at all. Why is it two people born again on the same day, ten years later, they are more poles apart spiritually? If it were all God's part, every one of us would be at the same level. The day you are born again, you just become... Every cup would be growing, filling up with water in the same level.

Every cup would be full of wine at the same level. We were both born again on the same day. It's not.

If it was only our part, we wouldn't even get one drop into that glass. No, we can struggle and struggle and struggle. Do you think you can manufacture the life of God even if you work at it all your life? I cannot manufacture one drop of the life of God in me.

Impossible. I can make myself a good human being. That's like a dog being trained to be a good dog.

It's not a human being, it's just a good dog. That's not divine nature. God's not trying to make good human beings.

He's trying to make God's children. And there's a lot of difference between having a good dog in the house and a child that came out of me. God wants to bring children to birth.

That's why Jesus said, you can't get to heaven by good works, you've got to be born again. God has to, through the Holy Spirit, bring you to birth spiritually. If that birth does not take place in your heart, no chance.

You'll be just a good human being like having a good dog in the house. And a good dog in the house can never be a child, no matter how obedient it is, no matter how good it is, and no matter how many years it's been in the house, it can never be a child. So some people come to the church, and I'll tell you honestly, I'm telling you from what I've seen at CFC, in the early days also, we saw it, people came in, and you had through the years people come, somebody's relative comes, somebody's uncle comes, somebody's father comes, somebody's brother comes, somebody's sister comes, and all types of people come to the church.

We don't turn anybody away. But they're not all coming into the divine life. I see many of them year after year after year in CFC, they're becoming good people.

I don't see a spark of divine life in them. When I speak to them, I don't sense that they know Jesus. I don't sense that they're passionate about knowing Jesus and wanting to be more like him.

They're just good human beings. They like to come to good church, and it's like good moral instruction. You know, don't tell lies, and don't get angry with your wife, and don't cheat in the office, and speak the truth, be kind to people, help the poor, forgive your enemies, and so many many good things we hear, and we can become good human beings.

Good human beings without a spark of the divine life. And like we heard, it is an unquenchable thirst that will bring the divine life. The Holy Spirit brings the divine life.

I've met people who don't have a passion and thirst for the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John chapter 7, some people say, anybody can come to Jesus, come to Jesus, come to Jesus. I say, no, you can't.

There are only certain type of people whom Jesus said can come to him. If you don't qualify, you cannot come. Just like you can't join a college unless you fulfill certain qualifications.

You got to get certain amount of marks in the common entrance test or your 12th standard examination, then you get admission, otherwise you can't get in. It's like that. Anybody can't go and join a college.

You can't say, I'd like to join a college, I've got the money. So what? You don't qualify. Anybody cannot come to Jesus.

Listen to this, John 7, 37, if a man is thirsty, let him come to me. What if you're not thirsty? You can't come to him. Thirsty for what? Thirsty that rivers of living water should flow out from you, verse 38, this he spoke about the Holy Spirit.

Thirsty for the Holy Spirit. God, I want this divine nature in me. I want it at any cost.

I'm thirsting, Jesus says, come. Another guy who's not thirsting, he's not invited. That is why I'm against all these meetings where, say, oh, how many of you would like to receive the Holy Spirit? Come here, we'll all pray for you.

I don't do it. I'll tell you why I don't do it. I don't know how many of these guys are thirsty.

How many of you want an exciting experience? Oh, everybody. How many of you are thirsty with a terrific passion to have the life of God in you at any cost, to throw out all your carnal nature and get rid of all your love for the world and sin? You really want it? I don't know all these fellows kneeling down here, so sorry, brother, go to some Pentecostal guy. He'll give you some fake experience and fool you and you go home.

But I'm not going to do that. I'm not the baptizer in the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist was humble enough to say that.

You're coming to me for baptism in the Holy Spirit? Sorry, sorry. I can baptize you in water. Go to him.

He's the baptizer. Go to Jesus. I went to Jesus and he baptized me in the Holy Spirit.

But I had such a thirst that it made me cry out to God, it made me fast and pray, it made me not to receive the Spirit. I received the Spirit the day I was born again. Just like those early Christians, the day they were born again, they received the Spirit.

I'm talking about being immersed. Baptism means immersed in the Spirit. That's quite a different thing.

Anointed. That's another thing altogether. So don't confuse that with the experience of the early Christians of the day they were saved, they received the Spirit.

So did I. And if you really accepted Christ, so did you, but you're not necessarily filled with the Spirit. It's rivers of living water not flowing out of you. And that's because you're not thirsting.

I want to tell you one thing. Every single person who thirsts and has faith to come to Jesus will be filled with the Holy Spirit. And if you're not filled with the Holy Spirit continuously, it's either because you lack thirst or you don't believe that he will do it for you.

You believe that an evil father will give good gifts to his children, but a loving father in heaven will not give the Holy Spirit. No wonder he doesn't give it. Another verse which tells us who can come to Jesus, Matthew 11, verse 28.

Come to me everybody, no. That's what preachers say. We already saw, come to me those who are thirsty.

Another verse says, come to me if you're weary and heavy laden. That means if you're sick and tired of your defeated life, come to me. What about if you're not sick and tired of your defeated life? I meet a lot of people who are in CFC who don't seem to be sick and tired of their defeated life.

That's why they're defeated even 20 years later. How can you be sick and tired of your defeated life and keep on being defeated 20 years later? When you're sick and tired of it, you'll want to quit as soon as possible. Someone once asked me, if somebody is in a dead church, should we ask him to leave it and come to CFC? I say no.

No, no. I never in my 40 years, I've never asked anybody to join CFC. Never.

It's the truth. None of you can say I asked you to join CFC. Nobody in the world can say that.

I do not invite people to join CFC. If you want to come, it's your choice, not mine. So people ask me, when shall we ask them to leave? I say, if a man is living in a pigsty, when should I ask him to leave? When he's sick and tired of living in the pigsty.

He's happy to live in the pigsty, let him stay there. When did the prodigal son come back to the father? Did the father go and plead with him? Oh, my son, don't stay with the pigs. Please come back.

I'm waiting for you. No. No.

The father stayed at home. And if somebody told him, your son is with the pigs, he said, let him stay with the pigs. Does a loving God represented by that father say about one of his children, let him stay with the pigs? Yes.

Until he is sick and tired of being with the pigs. Let him keep watching pornography. That is pig's food.

By the way, today's pig's food is pornography. He likes to eat it. Let him eat it.

If he enjoys it, let him enjoy it. Lord, he enjoys it every day, three times a day. Okay.

Let him enjoy it. I'm not going to plead with him to come back. One day when he's sick and tired of that pig's food, he will turn and come back and say, father, I have sinned against you.

Then he's ready. I'm not going to drag him out from there. And that applies to every other filthy habit.

Here's the guy who never seems to repent of the fact that he gets angry and angry and angry. It's another type of pig's food. It's coming out of his mouth all the time.

And say, father, he's eating pig's food. Let him eat. Let him keep on getting angry every day.

Let him stay with the pigs forever. Until one day, he's sick and tired of his defeated life. Sick and tired of his adulterous life.

Sick and tired of his anger and bitterness. Then let him turn around and come back. I'm not going to drag him back.

He must be weary and heavy laden. Then come to me. That's the gospel we preach here.

It's not the gospel you hear out there, where you have all these shallow converts who sign some decision card and keep on living in sin. You can't build a church with such people. You build a church with those who really want to be clean.

They don't have the strength to be clean, but they have a longing. The Lord doesn't say, cleanse yourself and come. The father didn't say, go and clean up your clothes and then come to me.

No, come with your filth, with your stink, with your torn clothes, with your skin and bones, body. Come, I'll welcome you. But you must be sick and tired of the pig's food.

And then I will give you something that you'll never want to go back to the pig's food again. Why is it so many people who say they've accepted Christ go back to the filth again? Because they're not feeding at the father's table. Supposing the father had starved the prodigal son.

Okay, son, you come back, you're not going to get any food here. Starve, starve. One day he'll run back to eat what the pigs are eating.

Because he's not, the food is on the table, he doesn't need it. A lot of Christians like that. But those who have come to the father's table and enjoy his food, I'll tell you, they never want to go back to the pig's food again.

I've eaten the pig's food, all types of pig's food in my life as an unconverted person. And even after I was converted, different types of varieties of pig's food here and there like all of us. I never want to go back to that again.

I've finished with it for life. I want to partake of eternal life. Is eternal life something that we can just let God give it to us as a gift? Let me show you what Paul told Timothy.

Timothy was a 45-year-old man when Paul wrote this to him. He had already been with Paul for about 25 years. And Paul writes to him in 1 Timothy 6, verse 12.

Fight the good fight of faith and lay hold of eternal life. Take hold of it. What does that mean? I thought I just got it and it's there.

It's like one of my fingers. It can't go. Eternal life.

I've got it here. It's like my fingers. It's not like that.

Take hold of it, lest you lose it. That's the meaning. Take hold of eternal life.

And this is to a man who's been faithful for 25 years. That means let the life of God fill you more and more and more in your spirit. And it can.

Till your entire being becomes full of the divine nature. Many people can't understand this matter of filling the glass. One last verse.

Colossians in chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1. Paul says in verse 24. I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. It's not natural for people to rejoice in sufferings.

Do any of you rejoice in sufferings? But if there's a goal in view, yes. People suffer for years studying hard at night because they've got a goal. They want to get a postgraduate degree.

A degree at the end of it. People are willing to suffer so much work. Look at all these people traveling 2 hours by road in the morning, 2 hours in the evening back home.

And working for 8-9 hours a day to make money. It's a suffering. They do it because they're going to gain something.

All of us are willing to suffer because we gain something from it. Paul says the same here. I rejoice in my sufferings and in my flesh.

Listen, read carefully. I do my share on behalf of Christ's body, which is the church. In filling up, in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Little by little by little by little. And you say, Paul, what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? He said, it's finished on the cross. There's no end, it's finished.

And Paul says, true, it's finished for him. He was tempted in every point. And he overcame in every point.

And he filled it up to the top and said, it's finished. Now I am following in Jesus' footsteps. I'm being tempted.

And I'm going to suffer like Christ in the moment of temptation. I'm going to deny myself, which is the greatest suffering of all. And as I deny myself, I partake in Christ's afflictions.

And I fill up what is lacking in my life of all the afflictions Christ went through. And I'm going to do it. And all of us, some have got a little bit, they've followed.

Some have followed more, some have followed more. Paul says, I've not yet become perfect, but I'm pressing on. This is what it means to take up the cross every day.

This is what it means when it says, freed from sin, enslaved to God, we get the fruit of our benefit of sanctification and the end, eternal life, more and more and more. This is what Paul meant when he said to Timothy, take hold of eternal life. These are verses that nobody will ever preach to you in any church.

Go and search the whole Internet and see if there's a message on filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Search it. It's very easy to search.

Go to any church, you won't hear it. They just say, receive Christ, you're okay. It's as if we don't need the Bible.

What's all this written for? They say this is the word of God, they don't respect it. That is a fundamental reason. Dear brothers and sisters, we go a different way.

We don't claim to be better than anybody else. But like Paul says, I'm free from the blood of all men, because I have proclaimed to you the full counsel of God. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

We pray that another generation will rise up. It's the burden of our hearts, our older brothers. As older brothers here, the burden we have is that another generation will rise up, which will be gripped by these truths that we have proclaimed for 40 years.

So that if the Lord tarries, we can move on in peace. Like Simeon said, Lord, I'm ready to depart, because I've seen the body of Christ. And I've seen others who are gripped by this truth, who can continue the work that you began 40 years ago.

I pray that many of you will rise up to do that in the coming years. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that you will give us grace to be gripped by these truths, basically so simple, for you have made nothing complicated.

You have hidden these truths from the wise and the clever and the intelligent and revealed them to babes. Help us to be in that number. We pray in Jesus' name.

---

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/si-5IzNCINk.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-balance-of-scripture/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**