

The Secret Of A Holy Life

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the root cause of sin, which is pride, and the need to uproot it through humility to bear good fruit. It highlights the significance of seeking God's grace through prayer, especially in times of temptation, following Jesus' example of praying with fervor and tears to overcome sin. The message stresses the difference between mercy (forgiveness for past sins) and grace (empowerment to overcome future sin), emphasizing the necessity of humility to receive God's grace and live a victorious Christian life.

Scripture: Matthew 7:17, Matthew 3:10, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 5:5, James 4:2, Romans 6:14

Topics: "Pride vs. Humility", "The Power of Prayer and Grace"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the root cause of sin, which is pride, and the need to uproot it through humility to bear good fruit. It highlights the significance of seeking God's grace through prayer, especially in times of temptation, following Jesus' example of praying with fervor and tears to overcome sin. The message stresses the difference between mercy (forgiveness for past sins) and grace (empowerment to overcome future sin), emphasizing the necessity of humility to receive God's grace and live a victorious Christian life.

Transcript

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7, after he spoke about the narrow way and the broad way, he used another illustration. Verse 17 to 20. Matthew 7, verse 17 to 20.

He said, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

And you will know them by their fruits. So, Jesus spoke about the tree which produces the fruit. Jesus spoke about the tree which bears good fruit.

So, when we think of having a pure heart, we have to think of the root from which that pure heart comes. Before Jesus, John the Baptist came and preached like this. In Matthew 3 and verse 10, He said, the axe is laid to the root of the tree.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. We can think of the evil deeds that come out from our flesh like bad fruit. All the sins that come out from our life are like fruit.

But if you only cut off the fruit, it will keep coming again. And in the Old Testament, they were only cutting off the fruit. That means, if you commit adultery, you will be punished.

If you commit murder, you will be punished. And even in the Old Testament, if a son did not obey his parents and was very stubborn, he would be punished. So, punishment is like cutting off the bad fruit.

No, the entire Old Testament was like that. That's why when that woman was caught in adultery, the Pharisees said, stone her to death. So, people were afraid to commit sin because of punishment.

I mean, even today, the reason why a thief does not steal is because he will be caught and put into jail. So, human beings are mostly, they avoid sin because they are afraid of punishment. But that's not the way Jesus lived a holy life.

The Bible says, Jesus lived on earth, tempted like us, but he never sinned. You must all know that verse, Hebrews chapter 4. This is a truth that we have preached in CFC for 45 years. And I want to tell you that most Christians have not seen this truth.

And that is why they are defeated. So, Hebrews 4, verse 15. It says, Jesus is called a high priest.

It says here, he can sympathize with our weaknesses. Why is that? No, he can sympathize with our weakness. Why is that? Because, he was also tempted like us.

But he did not sin. You know, supposing somebody has gone through great suffering. And he took it joyfully and did not grumble.

That is a good example for somebody else going through the same suffering. So, Jesus did not only preach against sin, he demonstrated it by his life. Jesus did not only preach against sin, he demonstrated it by his life.

Because Christ worshipped Jesus as God. Because he was God from all eternity, that is true. Along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he created this universe.

It is very difficult for us to understand God because we are human beings. It is just like a dog cannot understand many things we talk about. The dog is below a human being.

It cannot understand many things in human beings. And the same way, God is so much above us that we cannot understand everything about God. So, people say, how can God be three persons and one God? I say, that is because we are human, we cannot understand.

It is just like a dog cannot understand a human being. See, dogs think like this. Why do these human beings wear clothes? We never wear clothes, we dogs never wear any clothes.

Why do they send their children to school? We don't send our little dogs to school. Why do they keep money in a bank? We don't do any such thing. Why do they keep money in a bank? We don't do any such thing.

Even a little child can understand. So, if a dog cannot understand a man, it is not surprising that there are many things about God that we cannot understand. It is not surprising that there are many things about God that we cannot understand.

But we know that God is three persons and one God. That is why Jesus said, when you baptize people, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son of God came down and became a man.

He was still God, but had a body just like ours, was born as a baby, just like every human being. In fact, when people looked at him, they thought he was just another man. But just like we are tempted to sin, he was also tempted to sin.

But he never sinned. And that's what it says here, that he was tempted in everything as we are, but he did not sin. That he was tempted in everything as we are, but he did not sin.

Why is it important to understand this truth? If we look at 1 Timothy 2, the Bible is the only book in the world that tells us about how to live a godly life. You have to have your own ideas of how to live a holy life. And this is what I found in 1 Timothy 3, verse 16, Great is the mystery of godliness.

And another translation in the Living Bible says, it is true that the way to live a godly life is not an easy thing. We all agree. The way to live a holy life is not at all easy.

It's a secret. But the secret it says is found in, Christ came like us in the flesh. And he was pure in his spirit.

Now if he came without our flesh and was pure in his spirit, that's not a great thing. But when he came in a body like ours, and tempted like us, and never sinned in 33 and a half years, then we want to know, how did he do that? Because that is called the secret of living a holy life. Secrets are not something which we publicly proclaim.

Secrets we whisper in somebody's ear. Here it says that living a holy life is a secret. So, to whom does God whisper these secrets? Turn with me to the Old Testament.

Let's look at the Old Testament. Psalm 25 Psalm 25 and verse 14 Here it says, the secret of the Lord is only for those who fear him. Verse 14 Psalm 25 Here it says, the secret of the Lord is revealed to those who fear him.

And to them, he will explain this new covenant. So, God doesn't tell it to everybody. Because not everybody fears God.

To fear God is to hate sin. They may not be able to overcome sin. But if you hate it, that proves that you fear God.

In the Old Testament, people feared God. They hated sin. But they could not overcome it.

Because they did not know the secret. That secret became evident only when Jesus came to the earth. He came as a man, was tempted like us, and did not sin.

And the reason he did not sin was the Father gave him grace. We think that Jesus did not need grace. Because many Christians have taught grace means God freely forgives us.

But that's not the real meaning of grace. See, in the same verse, Hebrews 4 verse 15 Jesus was tempted like us so he did not sin. And even though he was tempted like us, he did not sin.

And then you say, therefore what? It says in the next verse. Therefore, we also can go to the throne of grace. So that we can receive mercy and grace in our time of need.

First, mercy. That is forgiveness of our past sins. Jesus did not need mercy from his Father.

Because he never sinned. Why do we need mercy? We need it every day. Because in some way we are sinning every day.

Sometimes, most of the time, without realizing it. So, we need mercy every day. But, Jesus did not need that.

But grace, Jesus needed. We can put it like this. Mercy is for the past.

Grace is for the future. For the past means any failure. For my whole past life, I need mercy.

And if this morning I failed, I need mercy for that also. But grace is for the future that I don't sin. Let me repeat that.

Mercy is for forgiving our past sins. Grace is to help me to overcome sin in the future. And if I sin again, I need mercy.

So, here it says, Jesus was tempted like us. But he did not sin. Therefore, let us get the same grace that he got.

Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace and get the same grace to help us, in our time of need. It's not talking about our financial need. It's not talking about need for healing.

It's talking about the same thing mentioned in the previous verse, temptation. When we are tempted, we are needy, we need help. And Jesus got help, we can get the same help.

So, people say, how do you say that Jesus got grace? See, most Christians do not believe that Jesus got grace. The only thing we need is grace. I'll tell you why they believe that.

Because they don't read the Bible carefully. They read it so fast and so carelessly. That's why they don't know.

See, Luke's gospel, chapter 2, we read that as Jesus grew up in Bethlehem. No, he was born in Bethlehem, he grew up in Nazareth. And see what it says about his growth in Luke 2:39. See, in the city of Nazareth, verse 30, he continued to grow and become strong.

And he increased in wisdom from the time he was a child. And what was upon him? The grace of God was upon him. The grace of God was upon him.

It's so clear. Jesus received grace. And if you get grace, what happens? You overcome sin.

See, Romans 6, verse 14. It's a very important verse. It's a very important verse.

Remember this verse always. Sin shall not be master over you because you are not under law but under grace. If I am under law, law is over me.

I'll keep on sinning. Because the law only says, don't do this, don't do this, don't do this. But I still do it.

I know it's wrong because the law tells me it's wrong. Don't get angry. But I do it.

I'm under law, I keep on sinning. But when you come under grace, that helps me but I'm tempted to get angry. if grace is upon us, we don't sin.

That is Romans 6, verse 14. When we are under grace, it means grace of God is upon us. It's like saying, if you stand under this roof, if this is grace, then the rain cannot fall on my head.

Let there be any amount of rain. This is grace. I will not get wet.

If you are under grace, you will not sin. What did we read once again in Luke chapter 2? We read there in Luke's Gospel in chapter 2, verse 40. Grace of God was upon Jesus.

And when you are under grace, you don't sin. It's so clear. That's why he did not sin.

Not because he was God. Supposing Jesus came here as God. For example, Supposing he did everything in the power of God, then we cannot follow him.

So many times Jesus said, follow me, follow me, follow me. But how can you follow him if he had lived in the power of God? I say, Lord, I cannot follow you. You used your power as God to live on this earth.

How can I follow you? I am not God. And that is what the devil has blinded the minds of almost all believers. He tells them, you cannot follow Jesus.

He was God on earth. Yes, I know he was God on earth but he did not use that power when he fought against sin. Let me use an example.

Supposing an angel comes from heaven and swims across a river with his wings. He says to me, follow me. What will I say? What will you say? The angel says, follow me across this river.

You don't know how to swim. You will say to him, I can't follow you. I don't have wings.

Supposing the angel says, I will teach you how to swim. And he flies across this river and says, come, follow me. He says, no, I can't follow you.

But if he takes off his wings he becomes like us. When you get into the water you go down. And he shows you, see, I will also go down if I go into the water.

But see now how I am struggling and I don't sink. Now do what I do. Then I can say to the angel, now I can follow you.

In the same way, if Jesus came down as God and says, follow me, follow me. I can't follow you because you have a power as God I don't have. But if he says, I lay aside that power and I live just like you.

I pray to my father for grace and I did not sin for 33 and a half years. Follow me. That is the secret of living a holy life.

I was born again when I was 20 years old and for the first 16 years I did not know that Jesus came like me. As a believer I was defeated, defeated, defeated just like many of you. I gave up my job to do full time work and I was still defeated.

Until one day God opened my spiritual eyes to see one thing the secret of Godliness is Jesus came like you. I was seeking, seeking how can I live in victory over sin every day. So God saw, I feared Him.

So He whispered a secret into my heart. What we just saw, the secret of Godliness that Jesus was tempted like me and He wanted grace so He did not sin. So let me explain the difference between mercy and grace.

Supposing you are climbing a mountain that is a picture of living the Christian life it is a struggle and then you slip but you do not fall down you are hanging on with your hands to the cliff. You are about to fall and you are too proud to ask anybody to help you and you are hanging there trying to climb and you hang there for about one hour and then you become weak and you fall to the ground and your bones are broken then you have to call for the ambulance the ambulance picks you up and takes you to the hospital that is called mercy. You tried to overcome sin you failed you fell you got angry you lusted with your eyes you told a lie then you have to say, Lord please forgive me that is the ambulance coming and picking you up and forgiving you and fixing your broken bones etc.

Grace is different here also I am hanging there about to fall and I am not too proud to ask for help Lord please help me and I find his arms come under my armpits and lifts me up and puts me on the rock and I said, Lord what happened I didn't fall this time that was grace when God forgives you after you have fallen that is mercy when God helps you that you don't fall that is grace Jesus never needed mercy because he never fell but he needed grace everyday because he was tempted like us everyday how did he get it turn back to Hebrews 4 Hebrews 4.16 let us draw near to the throne of grace that we can find grace to help us in our time of need our time of need is when we are about to fall and we can ask for grace and you will get it how did Jesus get it chapter 5 verse 7 in the days of his flesh he prayed and he prayed and supplicated and he prayed with loud crying and tears what was he praying for Father save me from death save me from death and it says he was heard which death was that was he praying save me from physical death then we have to say he was not heard because he died but here it says this death he was heard there are two deaths the bible speaks of physical death spiritual death see James chapter 1 James chapter 1 James chapter 1 it says here verse 15 lust when it is conceived it brings forth sin and sin when it is finished brings forth death it is not physical death it is spiritual death so what death was Jesus praying Father save me from it spiritual death he was saying Father I never want to sin because sin was death spiritual death that means my fellowship with God will be cut off that is spiritual death give me grace give me grace how did he pray verse 7 with loud crying and tears that is why he never sinned it says he was heard verse 8 even though he was a son he learnt obedience in those situations in verse 8 even though he was a son he learnt obedience now you know why you don't get victory because your prayer is so weak Lord help me nothing came forget it and you fall into sin Jesus wasn't like that Jesus wasn't like that he was tempted to get angry he would pray so that he never got angry he was tempted with women tempted with money tempted to be proud tempted to take revenge on others but never never sinned because every time he prayed he got grace that is what Jesus meant when he said follow me many Christians haven't understood that I myself did not understand that I will tell you because for 16 years I was not serious about overcoming sin and I will tell you something those of you who are not serious about overcoming sin you will not even understand what I am saying right now you will say oh this is all too complicated that's because you are not interested in overcoming sin you be honest you have tried so many methods to overcome sin but you are still defeated today but this is a secret and I tell you you can overcome if you do it Jesus way if you don't believe me you follow Jesus method next time you say Lord I want to follow you I want to overcome sin so I remember when I was a young man and I understood this truth I was about 35

years old and when I was tempted I said Lord Jesus when you were in Nazareth you were tempted exactly like I am being tempted now what did you do? I want to do the same thing he prayed wholeheartedly from his heart I said Lord I want to pray like that and I found I was lifted up by God and I did not sin so it says here let us come boldly and ask God for grace to overcome sin see God is not going to do it if you don't ask him see there is a law of God it says here in James 4 the last part of verse 2 remember this sentence always the last sentence in verse 2 you do not have because you do not ask you do not have because you do not ask you don't have victory because you don't ask for it you don't have victory because you don't ask for it and if you ask you don't pray like Jesus prayed with loud crying and tears oh father I don't want to sin supposing you are drowning in a sea and you don't know how to swim how will you pray won't be a weak prayer please help me you cry out oh God I am drowning please help me or if a lion is chasing you how will you pray you cry out oh God please help me save me from this but we don't pray like that when you are tempted to sin we are afraid of drowning we are afraid of being eaten up by the lion but we are so used to sinning that it doesn't matter if we sin I will tell you it is much worse to sin than to drown in the sea when you see that you will cry out to God Lord I don't want to sin if you husbands pray a prayer like this Lord 365 days of the year I never want to raise my voice and get angry with my wife and wife prays like that 365 days of the year I never want to raise my voice at my husband are you serious about that most married people are not serious and that's why 10, 15, 20 years they still keep on defeated and they say they are following Jesus which Jesus not the Jesus who was never defeated by sin not the Jesus who prayed with loud crying and tears to the father to help him see we will pray like that for sickness to be healed or to get a job or to get money but the most important thing we need is to overcome sin so ask God to help you in this area Lord teach me how to overcome sin then I want to come back to what I showed you first in Matthew chapter 3 I told you in the old testament they dealt with sin with a pair of scissors supposing you got a tree in your garden outside your house and it's always producing bad fruit but you don't want anybody to see the bad fruit because people say what bad fruit this man has as soon as the bad fruit comes you take scissors and cut it off but if the tree keeps on producing fruit everyday you have to keep cutting it John the baptist said in Matthew chapter 3 now God is not coming with scissors he has come with an axe verse 10 an axe that is laid to the root of the tree then this tree will completely stop producing fruit bad fruit and he puts a new tree there a new seed and a good tree comes so what is the root which God wants to hit in our heart that is what the bible calls pride pride is the root from which every sin that you ever commit comes that has to be hit at the root another seed has to be planted in our heart which produces good fruit and that seed is called humility God gives his grace only to the we read in 1 Peter 5 verse 5 now I told you that we need grace to overcome sin but God does not give grace to everybody 1 Peter 5 verse 5 he gives grace to the humble so when you pray if you are humble you will get grace but if you are not humble you won't get grace and you will fall into sin and I will tell you this no matter how much you pray you will keep on sinning because you are not humble say to yourself this truth I am falling into sin only for one reason I am proud I am not humble because if I were humble I would get grace and when grace is over me I cannot sin I know when I used to fall I used to ask the Lord Lord I don't need to ask you why I fell even in the thoughts even in the bad thoughts even after I overcome external sins the thought I would fall I said why did I fall there I don't have to ask because I didn't get grace there is no need to ask if grace was on me I would not fall in my thoughts so I never asked God why did I fall I knew the answer I did not get grace and I did not have to ask the second question also why didn't I get grace I know God must have seen some pride in me so he did not give me grace so two questions I did not ask why did I fall no need to ask I didn't get grace no need to ask I was proud so whenever I fell in my thoughts the only question I asked was the third question where was I proud show me Lord and then the Lord would show me maybe the previous week I did something good and I was a bit proud about it and like that I discovered

areas of pride in my life and as I discover I cleanse myself and I began to get grace more and more so when you sin don't ask the Lord why did I fall into sin the answer is you did not come under grace don't ask the second question why didn't I get grace that is also here God does not give grace to the proud so you got two answers without even asking I fell into sin because I didn't get grace I didn't get grace because I was proud so the only question you need to ask when you fall into sin is Lord show me where was I proud that you could not give me grace and I fell into sin and it's amazing how God is so faithful and loving he will tell you sometimes he says you compared yourself with somebody else and you thought you are better than him God forgive me I don't want to compare myself with anybody it's a wonderful thing to discover more and more areas of pride you know it's like the children of Israel went and occupied more and more of the land of Canaan you can read that in the book of Joshua I looked at the land of Canaan like the land of pride inside my life Lord you show me one area I'm going to conquer that there are still many other areas I don't know as God shows me I judge myself I conquer that little by little I'm conquering this land of Canaan there are still some areas left one day when Christ comes back I would have conquered the whole thing so the root which the axe has to be laid is pride I'll tell you another thing you don't have to be very educated to understand all these things that I told you even simple uneducated people can understand if they have a hunger and a thirst for overcoming sin but if you don't have a hunger and thirst to overcome sin in your life if you want to overcome only external sin that may be just because you want a good testimony before people Lord I'd like to overcome anger because my testimony is spoiled that way that doesn't show you fear God that shows you fear men you want a good testimony before men when you want to overcome sin in your thoughts where no man can see there you are not seeking honor from men you are seeking honor from God so in that area if you want to overcome Lord I'm really serious Lord I'm really serious in this I'll show you everything that you heard this afternoon so I don't believe everybody here will understand the proof of your understanding will be that something will change in your life from tomorrow onwards you'll have a great desire to pray that you overcome all sin let's pray Heavenly Father I can't explain all these things so clearly for everybody to understand I tried my best but Lord only your Holy Spirit can explain these things and I know one thing Father that everyone here who is sincerely desiring for victory you will explain it to them and I know the rest will never understand have mercy upon us help us to know the grace of God that gives us power to overcome pray in Jesus name Amen

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