

The Way of Faith (■■■■■)

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the critical role of faith in accessing God's grace and living a victorious Christian life free from the bondage of sin.

Duration: 1:01:22

Scripture: Exodus 3:17, Joshua 1:5, Matthew 9:27-28, Romans 6:14, Romans 10:17, Hebrews 4:1-2

Topics: "Chinese"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God desires for all people to be saved, but acknowledges that not everyone is saved because they lack belief. The preacher emphasizes that entering into a life free from the rule of sin is not automatic, but requires faith. The sermon highlights various 'giants' such as anger, sexual lust, love of money, and depression that can dominate believers' lives. However, the preacher encourages believers to have faith and trust in God's promises, just as Joshua conquered the giants in Canaan's land. The sermon concludes with a warning against unbelief and a call to enter into the rest and victory that God has promised.

Transcript

Last Sunday, we considered how the Lord Jesus has brought us something in the New Covenant, which is more than what Moses brought through the Old Covenant. And in the New Testament, there are certain words that are found frequently, which are not found in the Old Testament. One of those words is grace.

It's very difficult and rare to find that word in the Old Testament. That is distinctively a New Testament word. Because that was something special that Jesus brought.

We saw a little bit about it last Sunday morning. I want to turn to another word this evening. We read in Ephesians 2 verse 8. By grace, you have been saved through faith.

And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. And here is another word that we find very often in the New Testament, faith. That's not very commonly found in the Old Testament.

Hebrews 11 tells us that even the Old Testament saints lived by faith to some extent. But it comes to its fullness of understanding only in the New Testament. We can look at it like this.

Grace is God's hand full of blessing coming down to us. We are told in Ephesians 1 verse 3 that every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ is ours. But how much of those blessings which God brings

down in His hand becomes mine depends on my faith.

Grace is God's hand reaching down with blessings to me. Faith is my hand reaching up and taking those blessings from God's hand. We are saved by faith.

We are told in Romans 1 verse 17 that we are to live by faith. The righteous shall live by faith. That means all through our life, my life must be one of faith.

Now it's a very sad thing that this phrase, living by faith, has been limited to full-time workers. I believe that's a great deception of Satan. So that when we hear about living by faith, we think of money, that a person is not getting a regular salary.

But here in Romans 1 verse 17 it says that every child of God, every righteous person must live by faith. And then it also mentions in that same verse, Romans 1 verse 17, that this righteousness is revealed from faith to faith. From one degree of faith to another degree of faith.

From the first standard to the second standard to the third standard and on in our spiritual education. So faith must not be a static thing that remains at one level all the time. I come to Christ initially and I receive forgiveness of sins by faith in His shed blood.

That's good. That's like joining school and going into the kindergarten. That's where we all have to start.

But the intention is not that I remain in kindergarten forever. From faith to faith. We find another phrase in 2 Corinthians 3 verse 18.

And you will see a connection between these two verses. In 2 Corinthians 3 verse 18 it says that the Holy Spirit transforms us into the likeness of Christ. The last part of that verse, from glory to glory.

From one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory. But that is not going to be automatic. I can remain at the same level without progress.

And it's possible to make progress and even backslide to go lower than I was before. But God's will is that as my faith increases, my glory will also increase. Now we also know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

So from faith to faith means that my faith is enlarged to receive more of what God's word has promised for me. I'll give you an example. In the Old Testament, 600,000 Israelites had faith to leave Egypt.

In the Old Testament, 600,000 Israelites had faith to leave Egypt and enter the land of Galilee. They put the blood of the Lamb outside their door one night. Their faith saved them from death.

Of those 600,000 people, only two had faith to enter the land of Canaan. That was Joshua and Caleb. They had faith to enter Canaan.

But 600,000 had faith to put the blood outside their door. And we are familiar with that Old Testament passage. We must have read it many times in Numbers 13 and 14.

We read it very clearly in Numbers 13 and 14. There we see God's warning that these 600,000 people cannot enter the land of Canaan. Only Joshua and Caleb.

There is a commentary on this in the New Testament. I just want you to notice how it is mentioned here in Hebrews 3.16. It says, Who provoked him when they heard, Did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? Who provoked him when they heard, Did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? We see that they could not enter Egypt because of unbelief. But they had faith to come out of Egypt.

They had faith to be baptized in the Red Sea. But they did not go on from faith to faith. And that is how it is with many believers.

They have faith in the blood of the Lamb. They have faith to come through water baptism. But they do not have faith to enter the promised land.

And it says here in chapter 4 verse 1. That this is a warning for us. He says, Let us fear. Because we have a promise of entering into His rest.

That rest is the land of Canaan. It is a picture of the life of victory. Where the giants are slain.

And it is the giants that brought fear into the heart of the ten spies whom Moses sent in Numbers 13. Those giants symbolize the many sins that have ruled us and defeated us for many many years. Think of anger.

What a massive giant that is. It stands ruling so many believers. And it frightens believers saying, You will never get out of my grip.

Think of sexual lust. What a massive giant that one is. How it terrifies believers saying, You will always be my slave.

You will never get out of my grip. The love of money. Bitterness.

Depression. I remember in my life, how for years depression ruled me. Even as a Christian.

As a born again Christian. It was a giant in my life. Praise God, Jesus set me free.

Completely brought the giant under my feet. Now when we see these giants. And you can think of other giants in your own flesh.

You are born again. You have faith in the blood of the lamb. Faith for baptism.

Now God has brought you to the borders of Canaan's land. It's a wonderful land to live in. Land flowing with milk and honey.

Land of peace. Joy. And victory.

Then we can have two reactions. One is the reaction of the ten spies. The other is the reaction of the two spies.

The ten spies said, It's a beautiful land. But it's impossible for us to possess it. And we can read a word like we read last Sunday in Romans 6.14. Sin shall not have dominion over you.

That's just like God told Joshua in Canaan's land. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. That's exactly what the Lord told Joshua in Joshua 1.5. You know that promise.

No man, that means none of these giants, will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. And that was a tremendous thing. And Joshua believed that.

And we read that he conquered those giants one by one. And in Joshua chapter 12, we read a list of 31 giant kings whom Joshua defeated. And you know what Joshua did? He got the children of Israel to put their foot on the necks of these giants.

Yes, and he said, The Lord will do this to all your enemies. Joshua chapter 10, verse 24 and 25. He made the leaders of Israel put their foot on the necks of the giants.

On top of the necks of these giant kings of Canaan. You know how he did that? Only one reason. He had faith.

That when God said, No man will be able to stand before you, he believed it. So, every one of them came under his foot. And he stirred faith in the hearts of the other Israelites.

He said, What the Lord has done to these kings, he will do to all your enemies. And yet we know that in later generations, they didn't have that faith. We read many years later of the giant Goliath standing there, and all the Israelites again trembling before him.

Till there was one young brother called David, who had faith that this Goliath can come under my feet. How did David have that faith? Because he had read in the word of God, that God had done that for Joshua. These things are written for our instruction.

When we see the giants that loom in our flesh. If I think, I have always got to be defeated by these giants. Then I will be like those Israelites in the times of the judges, and in the time of King Saul, trembling and defeated.

But, if the spirit of Joshua, the spirit of David, the spirit of faith, can come to my heart. Say, Lord Jesus, the mighty power of your Holy Spirit is more than enough to bring the sin under my foot. We can possess something, which we haven't possessed so far.

We can end our wilderness wanderings of going around in a circle. And enter the promised land. What many believers call progress, is just going around in circles.

After ten or fifteen years, they are in the same position, spiritually, defeated by the same old sins they once had. Ten or fifteen years ago. Can we say that is a life that has gone from faith to faith to faith? No! That's a static life.

God wants us to possess the land. He wants our body to be ruled by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. He wants the giants that have ruled this body to be brought under our feet.

But I told you earlier, grace is God's hand stretched out to us. But how much I take from God's hand depends on my faith. We see in Hebrews 4.1 that we must fear that when God has given us a promise of entering His rest, we miss it.

Now if God has not given a promise, I can't have faith. For example, supposing I would like to have a new head of hair. Yeah, I would like that very much.

But I read through the New Testament and I don't find any promise that I can get that new head of hair in this life. I believe I'll get a new head of hair when I'm resurrected. But there's certain things I can get only when I'm resurrected.

I can be totally free from sickness and disease and death only after the resurrection. The thorns will stop poking me only after the resurrection. But there are certain things I can have before the resurrection here in this life.

So if God hasn't given me a promise something in this life for a new head of hair, it's no use my praying for it. Faith comes by the word of Christ. I must look for a promise in the word of God.

The word of Christ referred to in Romans 10, 17 refers particularly to the New Testament promises. That's why it's called the word of Christ. If I find a promise there then I can claim it.

We're told in Hebrews 1 there is a promise of entering into God's rest. And it's for us. He's not writing to unbelievers He's writing to believers in Hebrews 4. He says, holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling let us appear lest we have a promise of entering into His rest and we don't come into it.

And then he says in chapter 4 verse 2 we have also got the gospel preached to us. What is the gospel? Just like they heard it preached to them. But the word they heard did not profit them because they could not believe what they heard.

The word was not believed faith was not added to the word so they could not receive it there in the wilderness. And in Hebrews 4.2 we read this very interesting expression. The gospel was preached like it was preached to them.

What was the gospel preached to them? You see that in chapter 3 of Exodus. Exodus chapter 3 and verse 17 and here is the gospel that they heard. The Lord said to the elders of Israel through Moses if you read verse 17 of Exodus 3 carefully you will find there are two parts to it.

Notice that carefully. One I will bring you out of Egypt and two I will bring you into the land of all these giants the land flowing with milk and honey There were two parts to the gospel they heard there. There were all these elders of Israel listening to that word that Moses the man of God brought.

Do you know the sad thing? None of them had faith to enter Canaan. Only Joshua and Caleb. All the others heard and what was their response? They said we have faith for part one but not for part two.

And so they perished in the wilderness. Now what is the gospel preached to us? It is the same thing. I will bring you out of Egypt I will bring you into Canaan.

I can either be like Joshua and Caleb and have faith for both parts or I can be like Joshua and Caleb and have faith or I can be like all those other unbelieving elders and have faith only for one part I can believe that I am redeemed by the blood of the Lamb from Egypt Water baptized and out through the Red Sea onto the other side to another place in the wilderness Another question is whether I have the same faith the same faith or whether I have always remained in the same level of faith This is the challenge in Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 4 and it goes on to say in Hebrews 11 verse 6 Without faith it is impossible to please God God cannot do anything for us automatically without faith on our part That is very clear The word of God says in 1 Timothy 2 verse 4 an amazing statement that God wants all men to be saved Are there 4,000 million people on the earth today 4,000 million God wants everyone to be saved But we know

that everybody is not saved Why?

Because God cannot save them if they won't believe God wants all believers to enter into the truth of Romans 6 verse 14 that sin shall not rule over you But it won't happen automatically in anybody's life If my whole approach to Romans 6 verse 14 is one of unbelief it will never take place in my life It's not a question of Bible knowledge It's not a question of age It's not a question of experience It's a question of faith We can have Bible knowledge age experience and still wander in the wilderness But if we have faith we can enter in We can be young We can enter in by faith When older people miss it by unbelief That's a serious warning So we must seek to press on to all that God has for us God told Joshua No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life That's Joshua 1.5 Now I apply that promise to myself How do I apply it?

In terms of Romans 6.14 Which is the New Testament commentary on Joshua 1.5 We can see that this is what Joshua 1.5 says No sin will be able to make you its slave all the days of your life Now it's a question of whether I believe it or not If I believe I can have the promise If I believe I can have this promise If I don't believe I will be lost Brothers and sisters I want to tell you God doesn't respect anyone God doesn't respect you because you know the Bible a lot or because He respects you or because I am very old However big I think I am I cannot please God I can be an old Bible scholar and an unbelieving believer It's by faith and not by Bible knowledge or eloquence that we please God I cannot have faith for a new head of hair in this life But I can have faith that sin will not have dominion over me in this life Because that's promised in the word Now I want to turn you to Matthew chapter 9 Verse 27 We read there about two blind men who followed Jesus and they cried out saying have mercy on us O son of David and they came to Jesus in verse 28 asking for their eyes to be opened and listen to this Jesus did not heal them immediately even though they greatly desired healing What does that teach us?

That desire for something alone is not enough Just because I desire something good doesn't mean necessarily I'll get it from God These blind men desired something good from Jesus and Jesus could do it for them But he still did not do it for them until he had asked them one more question That was this Do you believe that I can do this for you? Now we come to the Lord today and we may have a great desire for deliverance from some bad habit or some sin Just like those blind men The desire is a good desire and we know that the Lord Jesus can do it for us We pray We desire it but we still may not get it because he asks us one more question Do you believe that I can deliver you from anger?

Do you believe that I can deliver you from lustful thoughts? Do you believe that I can deliver you from anxiety? From fear? From depression? From jealousy? From strife and quarreling? From discouragement? From the love of money? From every unchrist-like thing that there is in your life? May not come overnight? It doesn't usually happen overnight It takes time But the thing the Lord asks is Do you believe that I can do this for you? Now it depends entirely on us Once many years ago we believed that Jesus could forgive our sins Didn't we get it?

Yes, we got that Jesus offered us forgiveness and said Do you believe I can forgive you? Yes, Lord I took it from his hand Joy came into my heart because my guilt was gone And now he's brought me to the borders of Canaan's land And I see these massive giants ruling my life And he asks me the same question again Do you believe Do you believe I can take you into this land? And there comes the division between the ten spies and the two spies Ten versus two That's a pretty high percentage More than eighty percent Say no A small percentage say yes, Lord And what's the Lord's answer?

Verse 29 He said Be it done to you according to your faith That's the standard answer whether you belong in the ten spies group or the two spies group The answer is the same Do you believe the Lord says I can bring these giants under your feet and take you into the land? Joshua and Caleb say yes, Lord And the Lord says Be it done to you according to your faith you will go into the land The other ten say No, Lord And the Lord says Be it done to you according to your faith you won't get into the land So the answer is exactly the same But the end result is so different God does according to our faith What God grants is according to our faith We see here there are two blind men I often think like this I think if one of the blind men goes to Jesus first Jesus asks him Do you believe I can open your eyes?

He answers I believe you can at least open one of my eyes What would the Lord say to him? Be it done to you according to your faith He would come out with one eye open And he would start the one-eyed denomination Preaching the good news that Jesus can open one eye Tell me is that good news? It's certainly better than being blind In a sense it's very good news to a blind man that Jesus can open one eye But that's not the full gospel That's only half That's only half Then the other blind man goes in Then the other blind man goes in Lord asks him the same question Do you believe I can open your eyes?

Do you believe I can open your eyes? He says yes Lord, both eyes He says yes Lord, both eyes Same answer, be it done to you according to your faith Same answer, be it done to you according to your faith He comes out with both eyes open He comes out with both eyes open Must be heresy Why did he get both eyes open? Because he had more faith And if another brother gets something more from God than I do And if another brother gets something more from God than I do It's not because of any heresy, it's because he's got more faith than me It's not because of any heresy, it's because he's got more faith than me but particularly when we find it written in the word of God. Wonderful. Brothers and sisters, think of this word.

That's a word that's challenged me. It's a word that's made me weep. It's a word that's made me weep.

Matthew 13. I want you to see it. Matthew 13 verse 58 it says, Jesus did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

And in the parallel passage, in Mark chapter 6, it's put like this, verse 5, that he could not do any miracles because of their unbelief. Now I ask this question. Did Jesus want to do some miracles for them? What do you think? Yes or no? Yes.

Did he do it? No. Did he want to do it? Yes. Did he do it? No.

Why? Because they would not believe that he could do it for them. And this is the thing that's brought the fear into my heart. And that's challenged me.

That in that final day when I stand at the judgment seat of Christ, my name is called, my turn comes for judgment. And the Lord reveals my life on a screen. And he says to me, Son, I'm glad I could forgive your sins.

But there was so much more that I wanted to do in your life, which I could not do because you would not trust me. But there was so much more that I wanted to do in your life, which I could not do because you would not trust me. But there was so much more that I wanted to do in your life, which I could not do because you would not trust me.

You believed the doctrines of men more than the word of God. And your unbelief prevented me from doing mighty miracles in your life. And your unbelief prevented me from doing mighty miracles in your life.

I've pictured that before my eyes. I've pictured that before my eyes. If the Lord were to say that to me in the final day, If the Lord were to say that to me in the final day, Oh, how terrible I'll feel there at the judgment seat of Christ.

Oh, how terrible I'll feel there at the judgment seat of Christ. And I wish I could have one more chance to go back to earth and live my life. And I wish I could have one more chance to go back to earth and live my life.

But I can't have another chance. The one chance God gave me, I ruined by unbelief. The one chance God gave me, I ruined by unbelief.

And I've thought of that. I could hope God tells me that such a tragedy will never befall me at the judgment seat of Christ. I could hope God tells me that such a tragedy will never befall me at the judgment seat of Christ.

I don't want it ever to be written about me that he could not do many miracles for me because of my unbelief. I don't want it ever to be written about me that he could not do many miracles for me because of my unbelief. I say, Lord, I want to trust you for everything promised in the word of God.

I want my life to go from faith to faith. I want my life to go from faith to faith. I have been made righteous by the blood of Christ.

I have been made righteous by the blood of Christ. And the Bible says the righteous must now live by faith. The Bible tells us that a man is born of faith.

From faith to faith. And I want to live by that faith. Believing that no man can stand before me all the days of my life.

When faith for this began to come up in my heart for the first time many years ago, I was a defeated Christian. And I read the word of God, and faith began to rise in my heart for what God had promised. For deliverance from the power of sin.

Just like earlier, He had delivered me from the guilt of sin. And as I wholeheartedly sought God, and I cried, and I wept, and I fasted, and I prayed, and faith began to be born in my heart that God would fulfill His word. And then just like a little baby being born, I began to experience a little bit of victory.

Then I'd fall again. I'd cry out to God again. And it became a little better, like the baby growing up a little bit.

And then this thought came to my mind. How can I testify that God can give us victory? And the devil was there to say, don't talk about that. Because I'll send such a massive temptation into your life, and knock you right out, and then all your testimony will go.

And I thought about that. I said, yeah, that's possible. Then it would be very bad if I testify, and then the devil knocks me down.

And then God gave me this glorious verse. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13. There it says in the middle of the verse, 13.

God is faithful, who will never allow you to be tempted beyond your ability. Well, praise God for that verse. For that promise.

I said, Lord, that's wonderful. That you're going to filter the temptations before they come to me. There's a filter before it reaches me.

If it's something too much for me, God will make sure it doesn't come to me. Isn't that good? That's like saying that a teacher will not give a 10th standard examination paper to a 1st standard student. How can that student answer that question paper? When you're in 1st standard, you'll get only 1st standard question papers.

When you're faithful and you get a 2nd standard, then the temptations will increase a little bit in their intensity. So, I praise God for this promise. I said, thank you, Lord.

Now I have faith. This is God's promise, and I have to accept it with faith. I believe in you.

I believe that I will never be tempted beyond my ability. And even if there's no other verse in the Bible that talked about victory over temptation, that one would be enough. That means every temptation that comes to me is within my ability to overcome.

Then why don't I overcome? Unbelief. By faith, we overcome. God will provide a way of escape with every temptation, so that I can endure it.

Here's the good news. That Jesus can open both eyes. According to your faith, be it unto you.

And we read these promises in the word of God. Say, Lord, I want that. One verse in closing.

1 John 2, verse 1. John tells us the reason why he wrote his letter. Listen to this. This is the reason why the apostles wrote letters.

My little children. I am writing these things to you, so that you may not sin. Do you believe that? According to your faith, be it unto you.

But then, as long as we live, there is always the possibility of falling. That also John speaks of in the second part of that verse. If anyone sins, then we have an advocate in Jesus Christ through whom we can receive forgiveness.

In the father, we have a treasure, which is Jesus Christ. Let's listen to this. I should not put the second half of the verse first.

We should not start by saying, ah, we will fall. And then come to seek victory. This is not what the Bible says.

That first. And let's always keep that first. And then, and only then, the provision for falling.

If we reverse the order, we reverse the will of God. If we reverse the order, we reverse the will of God. First, brothers and sisters, do not sin.

Second, if we sin, we can be forgiven. But, if your faith reaches out only for the second one, that's all you'll get. But if your faith reaches out to the first part of that verse also, you'll get both eyes open.

Forgiveness and deliverance. Let's pray. Now while I head about in prayer, the word of God does not demand a response from our head, but from our heart.

The question is not, have I understood that this evening? The question is, do I believe it? Understanding, even the devil may have. But it doesn't change his life. We can get understanding, and it won't change our life.

But when we have faith, then a transformation can begin. And perhaps it's come newly to some of you this evening. You don't have to look at your past life, or past failure, your age, or your experience.

There's only one question that matters. There's only one question that matters to you. The Lord says, Do you believe that I can do this for you? What's your answer to that question? Then, according to your faith, be it unto you.

My brothers and sisters, I believe that among us, there are many people who are tired of their failed lives. Tonight, we raise our hands to the Lord, to receive His precious grace. Dear Father, We pray that in your words, you may pour forth the lemon fruit in many limes, we humbly ask in the name, and for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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