

# (True Faith and False) the Race of Faith

by Zac Poonen

---

*Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the distinction between true and false faith, urging believers to run the race of faith with Jesus as their ultimate example and forerunner.*

**Duration:** 46:33

**Scripture:** Exodus 19:20, John 1:39, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Hebrews 11:40, Hebrews 12:3

**Topics:** "Christian Growth", "Humility In Ministry"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of steady growth in the Christian life. He highlights the danger of pride and how it can lead to destruction, using the example of King Saul. The speaker also acknowledges that correct doctrine alone cannot save us, but rather it is a slow and steady progression towards becoming like Jesus. He encourages believers to strive for brokenness, humility, love, compassion, graciousness, and purity, as these are the qualities that reflect the character of Christ. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of following Jesus in evangelism, ministry, teaching, and shepherding, as Jesus himself was the greatest example in these areas.

---

## Transcript

So we looked at the righteousness of faith in our first session. We are trying to think of the difference between the true faith and the false. And now I want to look at the race of faith mentioned in Hebrews chapter 12.

Let us run the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. We know that Hebrews 11 is the great chapter on faith in the New Testament. It is referring to a whole lot of Old Testament characters, beginning with Abel.

And all of them did certain things by faith. It says, by faith they did this and did that. We find this verse in Hebrews 11, 6. Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that he is the rewarder of those who seek him.

And then at the end of that chapter, it said that all of these people, Hebrews 11, 39, gained approval through their faith. Now, not all of them did fantastic things like raising the dead and shutting the mouths of lions. Some did that, as we read in verse 33 and 34, 35.

Then it goes on to say in 35 and 36, there were other people who did not get raised from the dead, who were scourged and stoned, verse 37, and tempted, put to death in the sword and wandered about in deserts, verse 38, in mountains and caves and holes in the ground. So, it was not all, humanly speaking, success stories, like splitting the Red Sea and pulling down the walls of Jericho. There were also equally godly men in the Old Testament, particularly the prophets, who wandered about in mountains and caves.

But, all these, the first category and the second category, verse 39, they all gained approval through their faith. Whether they shut the mouths of lions or they got eaten by lions, they gained the approval of God. It's not only the one who shut the mouths of the lions, who was the man of faith.

The man who got eaten by the lion also was a man of faith. That's the thing we must remember in a day when faith is equated with external success, as though it's only that which the world can appreciate as success, is success in God's eyes. That's a deception.

All these, the ones who pulled the walls of Jericho down, the ones who put armies to flight and the ones who were killed, the ones who apparently triumphed over the enemy and the ones who were apparently defeated by the enemy, they were all gained approval through their faith and one's faith was not more than the others. I think it requires more faith to praise the Lord when you are being eaten by a lion than to shut the mouths of the lion. It's easy to praise the Lord then.

So, we shouldn't forget that. But, having said that, here it says something wonderful. All these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised.

And all these wonderful fellows still didn't get what God really wanted to give through faith. They only got something external. God, verse 40, had provided something better for us.

So, we can say that all of that is Old Testament, Hebrews 11. And then he says, now I'll tell you the real thing which God's provided for us. And that is what we get through Jesus.

We can say that those first three verses of chapter 12 are actually, should actually be the concluding verses of chapter 11. You know that chapter divisions were not made by the Holy Spirit. They were put in much later by man for convenience, for reference.

But, whoever wrote Hebrews, wrote it. There were no chapter divisions. So, I believe that the chapter should have ended in chapter 12, verse 3. Where it's talking about by faith Abel, by faith Enoch, by faith Noah, by faith Abraham, by faith all these people.

And God's provided something better for us. That's not a full stop. It's not a period after that.

It should go on to say, now I'll tell you what is that better thing. And the last one there is, by faith Jesus. He's the last on the list.

And that's the one we are to follow. That's the point here. God's provided something better than what Moses did when he split the Red Sea.

What Joshua did when he pulled down the walls of Jericho. What Samson did when he shut the mouths of lions. What Elijah did when he brought fire down from heaven.

And what Isaiah suffered when he was sawn in two. God's provided something far better than all that in Jesus. This must be something wonderful.

If it's something greater than splitting the Red Sea and pulling down the walls of Jericho and shutting the mouths of lions and putting armies to flight and raising the dead. Something far better. And when you read it, it doesn't look very impressive.

That's where you need to have the eyes of faith. To see that in God's eyes, what Jesus did. Jesus never split the Red Sea.

He never pulled down the walls of Jericho. He never put foreign armies to flight. He never shut the mouths of physical lions.

But in God's eyes, he was the only man that walked this earth who pleased the Father completely. What was it that he did? What was it that... We must forget for a moment, you know, the miracles and raising the dead and all that. Because the Father said from heaven, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Long before he had ever healed the sick. Before he cast out a demon. Before he had even preached a single sermon.

The Father said that when all his accomplishments in life in those 30 years were making stools and benches and shelves and things like that. That's about all he did. Nothing that we would call ministry.

These things, you know, which we think are things that God's looking for in our life. What was it that made Jesus so pleasing to the Father without ever doing one single thing of what we call ministry. If we don't see that clearly, we haven't seen the new covenant.

What these Old Testament people did in Hebrews 11, that was ministry. Sure. Noah built an ark.

And Moses led the people out of Egypt. And Joshua led the people into Canaan. And David built a kingdom.

It's all ministry, ministry, ministry, ministry, ministry. And then it says God's provided something better for us. And here's a man who makes stools and benches and shelves.

And God says, I'm very happy with my son. We got to see that. God's provided something better for us.

And therefore since we have such a great cloud of witnesses. Chapter 12, verse 1. Let us lay aside sin. That's what none of these Old Testament people could do.

They could be forgiven. David said in Psalm 103, Bless the Lord my soul who forgives all your iniquities. They have that.

Thousand years before Christ. Who heals all your diseases. Healing is not a 20th century discovery.

It is 1000 BC. Who heals all your diseases. Who blesses you with all material things.

Material prosperity is not a gospel of the 20th century. It's 1000 BC. God's provided something better.

That we can be free from sin. Let us lay aside every sin. Every encumbrance.

Every weight. Not only sins. But weights.

And let us run the race that is set before us. I get a picture here which is frequently used by the Apostle Paul as well. Of the Olympic Games.

He uses that in 1 Corinthians 9. He said, Everyone who wants to win a race in the games. To get this. They had a wreath those days, a gold medal nowadays.

Strives. He disciplines himself. In order to get this prize.

The Christian life is compared to a race. And here it's called a race of faith. Where we, as we cover ground as a marathon runner.

Covers ground in the race. We cover ground with more and more faith. And our forerunner in all this.

Is Jesus. He's called a forerunner. Now unfortunately.

That's not a title of Jesus. That's very well known among evangelical Christians. The average Christian doesn't even know.

That Jesus is called a forerunner. In the scriptures. They know him as a good shepherd.

Savior. Lord. The more commonly known titles.

Like that friend of sinners etc. But the title of forerunner. Which you find in Hebrews 5 and Hebrews 6. Most Christians have not heard of that.

And much less do they know Jesus experientially. As a forerunner. All these titles of Jesus.

Are meant to show us some aspect of his relationship with us. And we are to know him experientially in that way. We are to know him as a friend of sinners.

We are to know him as a savior. We are to know him as a shepherd. Who leads us into green pastures.

And we are to know him as a forerunner. That means one who actually ran the race in front of us. So that there's never a step we have to take in life.

Where we don't find his footsteps in front of us. To me this is a tremendous comfort. That in any situation I ever find myself anywhere at any time.

Whatever temptation, whatever trial. I can find the footsteps of Jesus in front of me. He never asks me to go where he hasn't gone himself.

This is forerunner. He was tempted in all points as we are. And he was made like us in all things.

These are truths found in Hebrews. It's one reason, one of my favorite books of the New Testament. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, we run this race.

He is the author and perfecter of this faith. Now what did he do through faith? Like in what we read. This big list of what Noah did by faith and what Joshua did by faith.

What did Jesus do by faith? He endured the cross. It's so unspectacular. Compared to all these wonderful things listed in Hebrews 11.

So ordinary. This daily grind. He faithfully endured the cross.

Despising the shame. There was a shame attached to this way of the cross. Which he despised it.

It's okay. People don't value it or think this is a shameful thing. It's okay.

And going that way, he reached the finishing line. That's how he finished the course. The finishing line is the right hand of the throne of God.

That's where we are supposed to reach to. But if this is the way our forerunner went. There can't be another way for us if he is our forerunner.

If we are going to run the same race that Jesus ran. This is what true faith involves. It means, I'm not running this race looking under Noah or looking under Abraham or looking under Joshua.

No. I'm running this race looking under Jesus. That's something far better.

Have you seen it? Who are we looking at? These are wonderful men in the Old Testament. To study their character is a challenge to us. I mean, some of these people had Christ-like qualities.

Think of Moses. When he prayed, Oh God, kill me and save these people. Don't let them perish in the wilderness.

That's truly Christ-like. And I'm not questioning the fact that some of these great Old Testament saints had Christ-like qualities. There was occasionally flashes of Christ-likeness that came through them.

Because they lived before God's face, naturally. But it says God's provided something better for us. It's not these occasional flashes of Christ-likeness that have to be seen in us.

But a constant, steady growth in Christ-likeness in our life. Progression, like when a marathon runner is running those 26 miles. Every step is, there's no backsliding in a marathon runner.

He's just going on and on and on and on. Every step is bringing him closer to the finishing line. And that's how it, this is how it should be in the Christian life.

Unfortunately, because we see so much of backsliding around us in Christendom. So much of worldliness. We have the very sad example of men who start off in great humility like King Saul.

You know, Samuel told King Saul. There was a time, King Saul, when you were little in your own eyes. And how well it went with you in those days, Saul.

But because God blessed you, gave you victories, gave you position. It went to your head. And look where you've come today.

You've destroyed yourself. You've begun to modify God's commands. And God's taken away the kingdom from you.

You can't be king anymore. That story has been repeated in Christendom in every denomination. And doctrine doesn't seem to make a difference there.

The people with wrong doctrine and right doctrine, all fall a prey to this terrible sin of pride when God blesses them. I wish correct doctrine would save us, but it doesn't. Because I've found just as many people with the right doctrine fall into this sin as people with the wrong doctrine.

Heads get swollen. They are no longer little in their own eyes. And it happens.

Yeah, that's unfortunate. But some of these people, occasionally they had flashes of Christ-like behavior. But the path of the righteous, mentioned in Proverbs 4.18, says the path of the righteous, the way God intended it to be, is described in Proverbs 4.18, like the sun rising at dawn and steadily climbing up to its noonday position without any backsliding.

Without any hesitation, without even being stationary. A slow, very slow, so slow you can't even see it move. And that's how the Christian life is.

It's not a way up there, all of a sudden. It's very slow, but steady progression towards becoming like Jesus, totally, when we see Him face to face. We will not reach there till we see Him face to face.

But it has to be a steady growth in brokenness, humility, love, compassion, graciousness, purity, etc., zeal, anointing. Everything steadily, slowly increasing. Isn't it sad that we see such rare cases of such examples in Christendom, and yet God's will is that every single child of His is meant to be like that.

I believe this is one of the great griefs in the heart of God. Like I said earlier, it's one of the things that was so difficult for God to do, to bless a person and keep him humble. It's almost as though, here's a person wonderfully converted, radically converted, becomes a disciple and it really begins to go well with him, and God's grace is upon his life because he is humble.

And then all of a sudden, because he is so outstanding compared to all the other half-hearted, wayward, backslidden, worldly Christians around him, it suddenly begins to go to his head. And then when it begins to go to his head, he becomes proud and God becomes his enemy, and he goes backwards, the sun goes down. And then after some time he has some terrific fall and then he humbles himself, and then again God gives him grace.

Why should it be like this? It's not God's will. The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines more and more until the perfect day, it says in Proverbs 4.18. That is God's perfect will. And that's how it was with Jesus.

It says He grew in wisdom. There was no sin in Him, but in this respect He is our example, that He was tempted like us and He overcame. And to me it was a great day in my life when I discovered that Jesus did not overcome sin as God, but as a man with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Otherwise He cannot be an example for us. He did not give up His deity. That's impossible for God to see as being God.

He could receive worship and forgive sins, things which I can never do. But in His temptation on earth, He was a man just like me. Tempted in every point as I am, and overcoming only with the power of the Holy Spirit that He offers me as well.

The Bible says that God exalted Him not because He was the Son of God. Read Philippians 2.5-8 very carefully. He humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, therefore God exalted Him.

It was not because He was the Son of God. Although He was the Son, Hebrews 5 says, although He was the Son, He learned obedience through the things that He suffered. That means He learned to obey when obedience meant suffering.

To obey when obedience brings prosperity and enjoyment is not something great. To tell a child, you must eat that ice cream or you must eat that chocolate and he obeys. That's not such a great thing.

But when he is told to do something contrary to what he wants to do right now, that's where obedience is tested. And our obedience is not tested when obedience brings comfort, gain, prosperity, honor, anything. It's tested when obedience involves suffering.

That's where the cross comes in. You know, in the conflict of translations, I was once telling someone, I said, I have a book at home called the New Testament in 26 translations. And every one of them says, if you don't take up the cross, you cannot follow Jesus Christ.

That's true in all translations. You don't need to study Greek to know that. You cannot follow Jesus Christ for a single day.

Luke 9.23 is the same in all translations. You cannot follow Jesus a single day if we don't take up the cross. That is the most important thing we need to understand, more than all the various shades of the meanings of the Greek in different words.

That's all, a lot of that is only for information in our heads. But the race that Jesus ran, spoken of here, is one where He endured the cross. And that encourages me that I'm not asked to enjoy the cross.

Nobody enjoys the cross, even Jesus didn't. And I don't have to pretend that I do. He endured it.

But He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. The joy was not in the suffering. I mean, you've got to be an ascetic or a self-flagellating monk to enjoy suffering.

And God hasn't called us to be that. We endure the cross because His joy is set before us. This is the way Jesus went.

This is the way, the fellowship with the Father. And this is, and it says here, Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith. This is what Jesus did by faith.

Praise God for what Noah did by faith, what Moses did by faith. But this is what Jesus did by faith. And I've got to fix my eyes on Jesus, the perfecter of my faith.

Perfecter of my faith is not Noah, it's not David. And if I fix my eyes on Jesus and run the race, I don't have to fall into the traps that David fell into with adultery and that Elijah fell into with depression. And find a comfort for myself saying, well, even the great prophet was depressed.

Or even the great man after God's own heart fell into adultery. A lot of Christians are finding comfort. They look into the Old Testament not to become holy, but to find comfort in their sin.

There's something wrong in that. There's something wrong when you look into the Bible to find comfort for your sin. The Bible wasn't meant for that.

The Bible was given to make us holy, to encourage us. Certainly, even if you've fallen, God will forgive us. But not to accept that as the norm for the Christian life.

Is David's standard supposed to be the norm for us? The man who did not have grace, did not have the Holy Spirit, did not have the New Testament. Is that supposed to be the norm for us? Is Elijah running away from Jezebel supposed to be the norm for us? Sitting under the juniper tree saying, Lord, take away my life, I've had enough. Is that supposed to be the norm for a Christian? I don't believe so.

And yet I remember in the days when I accepted that as the norm, that's where I lived. You accept something as the norm and say, well, that's how these people live, and that's how I'm supposed to live. Well, then you're running the race looking into Elijah.

That's fine. But the Bible says God's brought us something better if you want it. It's not bad, but God's provided something better.

And that is, He's given us someone else to be the author and perfecter of our faith. And the author and perfecter of my faith is not Elijah, it's not David. According to your faith, be it unto you.

If you make Elijah and David the author and perfecter of your faith, that's all you'll ever get to. But here it says God's provided something better. See, all these Old Testament people, they never had an example.

All they had was commandments. And that's a wonderful thing that none of those Old Testament people could say, follow me. Not Elijah, not Moses.

They were some of the greatest. They could never turn around to other people and say, follow me. The first person who said that was Jesus.

The next person who said that was Paul, teaching us that it's not only Jesus who could say it. Paul said, follow me, as I follow Christ. Here was Christ, the main forerunner going in front.

And behind him was Paul, a mini forerunner for us. And all of us are supposed to be little, little mini forerunners for younger brothers and sisters following after us. This is the race of faith.

This is true faith. Where we don't have to turn around to people and say, well, don't look at me. It sounds very humble.

You know, you say, don't look at me, look at... In one sense it's right that people are not to look at us in the sense of depending on us. They must look at Jesus. The race is run looking unto Jesus, not looking unto Paul or Peter.

But in another sense, what people mean when they say that is, please don't follow my example. Please don't talk to your wife the way I talk to my wife. Please look at Jesus.

He is the perfect example. But that's not what Paul said. He said, follow me as I follow Christ.

In the New Testament, ministry is not meant to be separated from the example of my life. In the Old Testament, even a Balaam could prophesy truth with his life not at all bearing witness to the truth that he was preaching. But not in the New Testament.

A man's life had to back up what he said. That's why you find where so much of Paul's life is described, particularly in 2nd Corinthians. The man lived what he preached.

I find that one of the great differences between the Old Testament and New Testament is, in the Old Testament they said, come and hear. And the New Testament is, come and see. You know, Moses has come down from the mountain, come and hear what God has to say to us through him.

And all Israel gathers to hear what Moses has to say. I mean, how he lives with his wife at home and all, we don't know, we're not interested. But let's hear what he's got to say, because he's just come down from the mountain, God sent a message for us.

But in the New Testament, it's different. The disciples, so you read in John chapter 1, two disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus once and said, Master, where do you live? And he said, come and see. And today, the world asks the Lord, Lord, where are you? And he says, come and see.

Come and see in this hall, I'm living there. Come and see in this church, I'm living there. See how they relate to one another.

All men will know you're my disciples when you love one another. Come and see how this husband and wife live together at home, that's where I'm living. From that foundation comes forth the message, that's the distinct feature of the New Testament.

But for that, we have to lift up Jesus as our forerunner, author and perfecter of our faith. This is the faith we need, the faith that will enable us to believe that we can follow Jesus. That the whole purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit was to make us walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Now this does not relate only to character. To live like Jesus does not mean character only because Jesus was the most hardworking servant of God that you can ever think of. There were times when he didn't have time to eat.

He slept under the trees, have you found a more zealous worker than that? He was serving all the time. I'm challenged by the fact that once he traveled 100 miles, 50 miles each way to help one person. One demon possessed girl, not even a Jew, a Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter.

He walked 50 miles, delivered her, walked 50 miles back, that's all he did there. It's not only character, it's ministry, it's evangelism. There was no greater evangelist than Jesus.

Following Jesus means evangelism. Following Jesus means character. Following Jesus means teaching.

There was no greater teacher than Jesus. There was no greater shepherd than him. So whatever our calling in life, he is the author and perfecter of our faith.

He's our forerunner. I remember when I started preaching, I said, well, the greatest preacher was Jesus, why not follow his example? I don't have to have a role model other than him. So whatever your ministry, to see the way he did it, this is how he becomes the author and perfecter of our faith.

How should a wife relate to her husband? The Bible says, as Christ submitted. Most people know only this verse which says, wife submit to your husband as the church is to Christ. I'll show you a better verse.

In 1 Corinthians 11 it says, the wife, the woman is to the man, as Christ is to the father. That means the relationship that Jesus had with the father when he was on earth, that type of relationship is the way a wife must have to her husband. So the example for a wife is not just the church in Ephesians 5, but Christ himself, the way he lived.

And there you see that there's no shame in submission. There's no inferiority in submission. Jesus wasn't inferior to the father, equal with the father.

But you see the glory of submission there and the way Jesus, though being equal to the father, submitted. In every ministry, Jesus is our example. That's how we run the race.

Enduring, taking up the cross. Now I believe that taking up the cross is what really brings expansion into our life. See there's a lot of talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit today.

And I believe this with all my heart. The most important thing that we need to experience in our life is being filled with the Holy Spirit. And we also need to recognize this is not a once for all experience.

We need to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Because when we are born again, our capacities, like that of a cup. Like it says in the Psalms, I will take the cup of salvation.

So the cup can be filled. A newborn believer can be filled with the Holy Spirit the day he is born again. That's how it was in the Acts of the Apostles.

The day they were saved, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. But how much? How much can you fill in a cup? But then, God's will is that this cup, which is our spiritual capacity of our heart, expands. It becomes a bucket, a tub, a pond, a river, many rivers.

And then is fulfilled the scripture which says, He who believes in me out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But it begins with the cup. But do you know there is a difference between the fullness of the cup, and the fullness of the bucket, and the fullness of the tub, and the fullness of the lake, and the fullness of the river, and the fullness of many rivers.

What is it that leads a person to these different stages? The cross. The way of brokenness, of humbling, of death. The self of accepting being crucified with Christ in every situation.

Of seeing exactly what it says here. Running this race, looking at Jesus who endured the cross. How did he make progress as our forerunner in this race? By taking up the cross.

Taking up the cross. That means putting self to death. There was a cross that Jesus took for 33 years, which people didn't know about.

They only saw the external cross, which he took on the last day of his life. But that was only the culmination of years of having an inward cross. But the disciples couldn't understand that.

Jesus said to them that there are many things I want to say to you, but you can't understand them now. When the Holy Spirit comes, He will open your eyes. He will take of the things which are inside me and show them to you.

He said in John 15 and 16, those two chapters. That He will take of the things of mine and show it to you. One of the wonderful things that the Holy Spirit did after coming on the day of Pentecost, is show us

through the episodes that there was an inward cross that Jesus bore all through his life.

I know when I saw this, it changed my whole Christian life. When I was seeking God years ago for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Lord opened my eyes to see that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit when He was baptized in the river Jordan, which was symbolically accepting death, burial. And what the Lord said to my heart was, as long as you choose this way, you'll have my anointing and my power upon your life.

The day you leave this pathway, you'll lose my anointing. I said, Lord, I never want to leave this pathway. The way of the cross, the way of death, the way of humiliation, the way of being harassed by other people and you accept it.

Because you see, God's permitted. God's permitted people to perhaps call you bilgeable prince of devils, or heretic, or false teacher, or oppress you, or trouble you, or take you to court, or spread false stories about you, or kill you perhaps. And you accept it.

You don't fight against it like Peter taking the sword and hitting back. No, you say like Jesus, the cup which my father has given me, shall I not drink it? If you can say that about everything that comes across your path, more than submission, acceptance is more than submission, you know that. You can submit to something without accepting it.

But acceptance is what brings expansion. The cup to the bucket to the river. The cup which my father has given me, shall I not drink it? That's the way of the cross.

It's not something I like. Jesus didn't like it. You see in Gethsemane, how he struggled with it.

But he said, fine, I accept it. The cup which my father has given me, I'm gonna drink it. He struggled for hours in prayer.

But he decided he was gonna go that way. This is the one who is the author and perfecter of our faith. By faith Jesus endured the cross.

It was not easy, but he went that way. And he made a way for us. This is true faith.

One other thing in closing. John chapter 12. It's often come to me, in different situations I have faced.

You know, when we get into some difficult situation, our first thought is, Lord, deliver me from this. Different situations I found that in my life. It's natural, it's a human reaction.

But when Jesus was in a difficult situation. He says in John 12. And verse 27.

Now my soul has become troubled. And what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, deliver me from this? No. Father, glorify thy name.

That is choosing the cross. Not Father, somehow or the other, get me out of this as soon as possible. But Father, glorify your name.

And you know what tremendous temptation it is when we are under pressure. To say, Father, please save us from this. Many Christians have gone through many many deep trials.

From which the Father could have delivered them by speaking a word. And the Father in heaven has not chosen to do so. He has allowed them to suffer.

Think of many pastors who have been in communist jails for 14 years or more. Suffering so much, their families suffering without enough money. Situations from which the Father in heaven could have delivered them in a moment.

And no doubt, we are tempted to pray in such situations. Father, save us from this situation. God did that in the Old Testament.

But the God who delivered Daniel in the lion's den did not deliver the early Christians from the lions who ate them up. The God who protected Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fires in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace did not protect the early Christians who were burnt at the stake. Because these were new covenant Christians who were going to glorify God by demonstrating that they were followers of Jesus who would endure the cross and finish the race with joy.

And if the Father gave them that cup to drink, they would drink it. They didn't have that grace in the Old Testament. But we do have it in the New.

And the Lord is determined to demonstrate to Satan that he's got a race of people on earth who even if the lions eat them up, will die glorifying God. Even if the fire burns them, they will have no complaint. They'll say, praise the Lord.

Father, glorify your name. Who will not say, Father, save me from this hour. But Father, glorify your name.

Whether I'm saved or not is secondary. This is the proof of my faith. This is the faith God wants us to have.

And so in the little testings that come across our way, that should be our prayer. Father, glorify your name. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we recognize it's easy to acknowledge that these things are right sitting in the comfort of a room like this. But in the time of trial, give us grace to acknowledge that your ways are perfect and to choose the way of the cross. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. That is, [www.poonen.org](http://www.poonen.org) for video messages, audio messages, and books by Zak Poonen that can all be downloaded freely. Our mailing address is Christian Fellowship Center, Forte da Costa Square, Bangalore, 560-084-INDIA.

If you would like to receive a weekly message by Zak Poonen by email, please send us your email address to [cfclit@touchtellindia.net](mailto:cfclit@touchtellindia.net). That is [cfclit@touchtellindia.net](mailto:cfclit@touchtellindia.net). The Lord bless you richly.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8266.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/true-faith-and-false-the-race-of-faith/>

# *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)**