

What Salvation, Grace and Faith Really Mean

by Zac Poonen

Salvation is to destroy the works of the devil in your life, including pride and self-centeredness, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Scripture: Matthew 7:11

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Description

This sermon emphasizes the deep understanding of three important words in Christianity: salvation, grace, and faith. It highlights the unconditional love of God even when we hit rock bottom, the eagerness of God to fulfill His promises, and the importance of faith in receiving what God has promised, especially in areas like being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Praise the Lord. I want to speak this morning on what I've spoken on many times, three important words not understood clearly by many, many Christians around the world, salvation, grace, and faith. There are many newcomers in our church who haven't heard our speaking on this in earlier times, and like the manna that fell from heaven for the Israelites every morning, it was exactly the same, but it was fresh.

I trust what you hear will be fresh to you this morning. First of all, salvation. I want to relate it to a verse in 1 John chapter 3. If we have a very low view of salvation, then our experience of salvation will also be very shallow, but if you look at salvation like this, the way I'm going to show you here in scripture, you can experience a lot more.

You know, the Bible, Jesus said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. In 1 John chapter 3, and we read twice, it says that the Son of God appeared for this purpose, two reasons. First of all, in 1 John 3, 5, he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

So that's the first part of salvation, to take away the guilt of all our sins, and the only requirement for that is that we turn, repentance means turn away from it, a change of mind concerning sin, and that we acknowledge our guilt, and believe that the entire punishment for our sin was taken by Christ on the cross, and that he rose from the dead. It's free. But there are these conditions, and that is to turn away from what I know to be wrong in my life.

It's very important to understand that our understanding of sin, if you walk with the Lord, will become more and more, will become more and more sensitive to sin. I see sin more clearly today than I did 54 years ago when I was first converted, but I could not repent then of the sins I know today. I didn't even know some of these things were sins.

For example, to murmur, or to be unthankful, or to get angry. I didn't know in those days that it was sin. A lot of believers don't know these are sin.

So all that God requires when he says repent is to turn from what you know to be sin right now. God doesn't expect you when you're in the kindergarten to know what people know in the 10th standard, but what you know to be sin, if you turn from that, you're forgiven if you trust him. And therefore, it also is true that if we are walking with the Lord, we should be discovering more and more of what is sin in our life.

It's like a student. The Bible speaks about our Christian life on earth like an education. It's an education in what sin is, because it's an education in how holy God is.

We're not primarily looking at sin, but we're primarily looking at the holiness of God. And as we see the holiness of God, we discover a lot of things that we never thought were sin last year. And if you're not discovering new sins in your life, new areas of selfishness and new areas of pride, perhaps, we'd say you're like a student who's still sitting in the same class year after year.

You may be getting 100%, but it's like getting 100% in the second standard for 25 years. That's not a great thing to boast that I'm getting 100% if you're sitting in the same class for 25 years. No student is happy to sit in the same class for another year, and no Christian should be happy with what his knowledge of sin was last year, and definitely not with what his knowledge of sin was 10 years ago.

This is the reason why Christians don't grow spiritually. Let me explain it to you. In the Old Testament in Exodus, there is a verse which speaks about the children of Israel being in slavery.

And it says there in Exodus in chapter 2, there was a particular time when God came to deliver them. And it says here in Exodus chapter 2 and verse 23, the middle of that verse, the sons of Israel sighed. Sighed means it was a longing in their heart because of their bondage.

And they cried out, and they cried for help because of their bondage, rose up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant, and God took notice of them. And then very next verse, you see God sends a deliverer.

So notice those words. If there's a sigh, if there's a recognition that sin is a bondage, it's like being in prison. It's like being in multiple prisons.

You get one prison gate open, and then you get into another one, and then there's another prison gate to be open, and it's a long while before we get out of the prison completely. But there are gates after gates after gates in this prison called sin. And we must be moving forward, getting more and more liberation.

But it'll come only if there's a cry and we recognize this is a bondage and a sighing and a groaning. Very few Christians are groaning because of sin. And that's the reason they don't always God doesn't take much notice of them.

It says here God took notice of them when they came to that place. And so turning back to 1 John 3, Jesus came to take away our sin. And it also says here in 1 John 3 verse 8, the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil.

And that's a good way to think of salvation. We know that Jesus Christ came to save his people from their sins. That's the meaning of the name Jesus.

So here is a definition of salvation. Destroying the works of the devil in your life. Have you experienced it? Are you experiencing it? Salvation has got three tenses.

Past tense, where all the guilt of my past life has been cleansed in the blood of Christ and forgiven. Present tense, where I'm in the process of being delivered from all the wretched things I've inherited from Adam. Can you think of some terrible things you have inherited from Adam through your parents? Lord wants to deliver you from all of them.

To destroy the works of the devil. The devil has done a terrific work in the human race, penetrated the human race with poison. And Jesus has come to destroy it.

Not just to save us, but to destroy the works of the devil so that it doesn't exist anymore in certain areas. And area by area, something like the destruction of the giants in Canaan and occupying that territory. The Israelites, when they went into Canaan and killed one giant, they got his territory.

And they killed another giant, they got his territory. But every sin you cling onto and don't take seriously to get rid of is going to hinder you from experiencing some part of salvation that Christ purchased for you through, first of all, the blood he shed on the cross. And secondly, through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has come to execute the results of Christ's work in our life. And that is to destroy the works of Satan. Little by little by little, that we occupy the land and Satan's power over us is gone.

So when you think of the works of the devil, and we look back to see how the devil became the devil and what are the works that made him the devil, and yet then you will see that it's exactly the same thing that he injected into Adam as a poison into his system that we have inherited. And so way back in the beginning, before there was any sin in this universe, good for us to see the origin of sin so that we know how, where to be delivered from it. And there were, the Bible says, you read that in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, God created all the angels and one who was the head of the angels.

We really don't know his name, even though some people call him Lucifer, but that's not his name. It's just a Latin translation of a word. But let's call him that since that's how he's known.

He was the head of the angels. Perfect. Bible says he was perfect in wisdom, beauty, position, and pride came into his heart.

This was the first step. It's very important to know this, my brothers and sisters. A lot of Christians and even unbelievers are very proud of the fact that, I mean, rejoice in the fact that they don't commit adultery.

They don't commit murder. They don't steal. They're honest.

They're upright. You may avoid all those things and still be one of the filthiest sinners in the world because of your pride and your arrogance and your conceit and the way you look down on other people and the way you speak down to other people. That's worse in God's eyes.

The origin of sin was not murder and theft and adultery. It was pride and it was an unseen thing in the heart. And you can be proud of anything.

You can be proud of your position, your money, your good looks, your intelligence, your Bible knowledge or your spiritual growth or the way God is using you or anything you've accomplished on the earth. Pride is the root of all sin because that's where it originated. So until you've eliminated pride from your life, you're not going to say you're free from sin.

And I'll tell you something, we will not be able to eliminate it completely until Christ comes. Whether you know it or not, there's a little bit of pride in every one of our hearts. What we know we can eliminate, but we must be discovering.

So here is an area where there's a need for constant discovery of the areas of pride you have not yet seen. The areas of the land of Canaan that are still under the control of the enemy. Don't be satisfied with people's opinion of you that they think you're a very humble man.

The perfectly humble man that walked on the earth was Jesus Christ. And until we become humble as he was, there's a lot to be cleansed away from us. God's ultimate goal in salvation is to make us like Christ.

It's very clear. Salvation means from what we were in Adam, be complete in Christ. That's a long journey.

And one of the most important areas that has got to be where we got to cleanse ourselves is the area of pride. So salvation is salvation from pride. That's what made the devil rebel.

You know, whenever we hear rebellion, what is it that causes rebellion in your little children at home? Or what is it that makes students rebel against their teachers or workers rebel against their authorities or rebellion in society or rebellion in the church? That people rebel against the elders. It is only pride. The root cause of it is pride.

I mean, they won't admit that. It's a shameful thing to say, I'm proud, so I'm rebellious. They will invent many other reasons that things are not doing well.

And these people not doing that doesn't understand or the elders are not doing things properly. These are all silly excuses. And the devil allows you to have so many excuses.

And if you don't see the root causes pride, you'll never be saved. So it's a wonderful thing when the Holy Spirit reveals pride to you. That's how rebellion comes.

So when it says Jesus came, salvation is to destroy the works of the devil. It's pride that makes a person question, do I really have to obey God? You know, that's the poison that Satan put into Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God had said, don't eat of that tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And what Satan was saying is, do you really have to obey God? I mean, you're an intelligent being, Eve. God's given you a lot of intelligence. Think for yourself.

What's the harm in that? You're not hurting Adam. You're not hurting any of the animals. You're not hurting God.

It's just a fruit. Eat it. The point is not that.

The point is, has God forbidden it? A lot of people don't think like that. That's because of their pride. They argue with reason.

What's wrong with this? What's wrong with that? What's wrong with the other thing? Well, as long as you argue like that, it shows you a fantastic pride. And the sad thing is you don't even see it. It's like, you know, if a blind man said that this wall was black, how do you ever convince him that it's not? I mean, I wouldn't waste my time arguing five seconds with a blind man about the color of a wall.

And pride is like that. Pride blinds you so much that it's pointless arguing with him. I've had people argue with me about something in scripture which is crystal clear to me.

And I wouldn't waste my time arguing with him because I see the guy doesn't want to see the truth. And the reason he can't see the truth is pride has blinded his eyes. Exactly like Eve, blinded by pride, which could make her say, well, that's right.

Satan seems to be right in saying, what's wrong in eating this tree? What's wrong in disobeying God's word? What's wrong in modifying it? A lot of Christians have modified God's word in so many ways. They take verses in scripture and say, well, that was only for the first century. Or that was only for that time.

And not who in the world said that? You. How does that idea come into your head? You don't want to do something. And so, of course, you say, well, find some excuse not to do it.

It's just pride. So that's how Satan infected man right in the beginning. When it says salvation is destroying the works of the devil, I want to urge you, my brothers and sisters, be wholehearted in cooperating with the Holy Spirit to destroy this wretched thing before it destroys you.

The reason why a lot of people do not grow spiritually is because they are not serious. They're not sighing like those Israelite slaves in Egypt. They're not groaning, Lord, deliver me from this wretched pride that's ruining my life.

There's going to talk a lot about that, but there's more. Then there's another thing that characterizes Satan in the beginning. That could be many things, but I just want to mention two of them.

One is pride. The other is self-centeredness, a selfishness that makes one think of oneself as the center of everything. And when Saint Lucifer looked at himself and said, why should God be out there? I want God to serve me as well.

I want to be the center. There are two gospels being preached in the world today. One is a false gospel, and the way to find out the false gospel is it is centered in man.

True gospel is centered in God. As long as human beings thought that the earth was the center of the universe and that everything revolved around the earth, they had everything wrong. Their physics calculations were wrong, and their understanding of astronomy was wrong because of one simple mistake.

I mean, they could identify the stars and the sun and the planets and name it, and maybe even calculate the distance and all that, but there was one fundamental mistake man made. They didn't know which was the correct center of the universe. It was not earth, but it looks like that.

You see the sun and the moon and the stars going around the earth as it were. And if you have not studied geography, you'll think, yeah, the earth is the center of the universe. It looks as if everything revolves and the whole heavens revolve around the earth.

And that's the mistake that man makes thinking that he should be the center. God created man so that God would be the center of his life. And until you find God is the center of your life, the center of everything, and like we're saying, Jesus, you're the center of my joy, the center of everything, you haven't really been fully saved.

I mean, the salvation may have begun, but you could have experienced only 1% of it. So that's the second thing that Jesus came to destroy. Salvation is destroying the works of the devil, destroying pride and destroying self-centeredness.

And we have to discover this is something you'll never be completely free from until Christ comes again. Christ was the perfectly God-centered person that lived on the earth. And we are self-centered and God has to move us from being self-centered to God-centered.

And that takes a long time. It's not just giving up the movies and giving up gambling and drinking and smoking. These are all peripheral things, which a lot of unconverted men also have given up long, long ago.

But to be delivered from self-centeredness, and you see that in the devil right at the beginning, Lucifer, before he became the devil, he said, why should I be outside? Let God also serve me. I should be the center. Right now, God is the center.

All of us are worshiping him. And the angel said, I want to be the center. I want people to glorify me and worship me.

And in a moment, he became the devil. Remember this, pride made the most beautiful angel into a devil in a moment. And pride can make you like a devil in a moment too.

Self-centeredness made that angel into a devil. And self-centeredness can make you into a devil to make you behave like the devil at home. That's why a lot of people who say they've accepted Christ behave like the devil at home.

They haven't been, they haven't allowed Jesus to destroy the works of the devil in their life. They haven't understood salvation as destruction of the works of the devil. Look at it like that from today onwards.

What did Lucifer want? He wanted God also to be in his circle. The angels were all under him. And he said, there's one person outside.

God, I want him. What do I mean by a man-centered gospel? A man-centered gospel is one that preaches Jesus can do this for you. You are the center.

You know, he can do this for you. He can forgive your sins. He can bless you.

He can prosper you. He'll give you a car. He'll give you a house.

He'll do everything for you. He'll heal you. You are the center of his life.

It's absolute nonsense. God is the center. I was reading somewhere about a thing called dog and cat theology.

It's very interesting. You know how dogs behave and cats behave? Very different. Both are pets.

A dog can love his master so much. The master does so much for that dog. The dog rejoices in that and says, wow, my master is so good.

He must be God. How could somebody be so good to a wretch like me? That's the right attitude. But a cat is different.

Cat also, the mistress, takes care of it and does so many things for it. Pats it and gives it milk and everything else. The cat says, wow, my mistress is so good to me.

I must be God. That's why she's doing so much for me. This is dog and cat theology.

All of us are in one of these two categories. Oh, God is so good. I'm sure I must be so important to him.

I must be such an important person that he treats me so nicely. No. It's because he is God that he treats us nicely.

We need to recognize knowledge. Not because we are so great. That's the difference between self-centeredness and God-centeredness.

So a gospel that says Jesus will do this and Jesus will do this for you. He'll heal you. He'll bless you.

It's a false gospel because it's centered in you. And the thing is, so many Christians can't see through it. They're so blessed.

They think by what they hear. But it's very interesting. All these television evangelists, all these preachers say, God can do mighty miracles.

He can do so many things for you and me. The only thing he can't do is give me money. So you better give me that.

That's what the preacher says. There's only one thing in the world this mighty God cannot do. He can't give me money.

You fellas have got to give me that. He'll do everything else for me. Don't be fooled by this type of deception.

These are conmen, confidence tricksters who've got into the pulpits of today preaching what they call the gospel. It's a man-centered fake. This is the thing that made Lucifer into a devil and it'll make all so-called Christians who follow this man-centered gospel into devils ultimately.

It doesn't deliver them from sin in their home. It doesn't deliver them from sin in their life. It doesn't deliver them from road rage when they drive on the roads.

It doesn't deliver them from anger or sexual lust or internet pornography or any of these things. They just hope that God will give them better houses, better lands and heal them and finally take them to a glorious heaven where he'll give them mansions and crown and all that. You got it all wrong, brother, sister.

That's the work of the devil and Jesus came to destroy it, to make us centered in God. It's not God revolving around me. No, it's me revolving around God saying, Lord, not what will you do for me, but what can I do for you? What do you want me to do, Lord? That's the word that changed Paul on the road to Damascus.

What will you have me to do, Lord? You become the center of my life from now on. My dear brothers and sisters, this is salvation and Jesus has come to destroy completely the works of the devil in your life. I can't do it myself.

I can't destroy my pride. I can't destroy my self-centeredness, but I can say, Lord Jesus, I've seen it. I groan and sigh like the slaves of Egypt in Egypt.

I want you to deliver me. He'll do it. God will take notice of you like it says by the Israelites.

Okay. The second word is grace. Well, you know, the very well-known verse where all these three words come together, Ephesians 2 verse 8, which says by grace, are you saved through faith? All three words come there, salvation, grace, and faith.

One of the most misunderstood verses in the New Testament. By grace, are you saved through faith? Okay. We understood a little bit of salvation.

Now let me explain to you a little bit of what grace means. Here's another word that's been misunderstood and clouded over by the devil through the years. And most people, particularly those who go to Bible school and get all confused there, understand grace as unmerited favor, God's unmerited favor.

That means a favor that God shows me, which I don't deserve. Well, my dear brothers and sisters, let me say that is an absolute falsehood because the Bible says there was no grace in the world until Jesus Christ came. John chapter 1 and verse 17, the law came by Moses, but grace came through Jesus Christ.

There was no law of commandments till Moses came. It was a period before the law. And then Moses came with the law and then Jesus came with grace.

But unmerited favor, everybody's got it in the world from the time of Adam. When God made clothes of skin from animal skin for Adam, he didn't deserve that. The guy had disobeyed God, but God gave him unmerited goodness.

Right from that first act of goodness to Adam, till today, the oxygen that people breathe, it's unmerited favor. What about those suicide bombers who breathe God's oxygen and go and kill people? Isn't that unmerited? You think they deserve to breathe that oxygen? No. What about the terrorists who blow up buildings and planes? God gives them air to breathe.

That's absolutely unmerited, but it's not grace. So don't ever let any theologian fool you saying grace is God's unmerited favor, because everybody in the world gets it. And the thing is, if you don't understand the real meaning of a word, you'll be satisfied with something less.

If you think a bicycle is a car, I mean, you're not foolish enough to think that, but supposing somebody has never seen a car in his life, somebody tells him, I'll give you a car one day. And he gives him a bicycle and say, this is a car. And he boasts that he's got a car and all he's got is a bicycle.

You'd look at that and say, hey, that's not a car, man. Who fooled you? That's exactly how I look at sort of Christians and say, that's not grace, man. Who fooled you? Who fooled you that that's grace? You got a cycle and you call it a car, that doesn't make it a car.

And you call some unmerited favor, which everybody in the world gets, and you call that grace. It's not grace. Grace can be understood only in the scriptures and it's hardly found in the old Testament.

You can only find it in the new Testament, really. And here's another proof that everybody doesn't get grace, that it cannot mean unmerited favor. James chapter four, it tells us that grace has to be merited, not unmerited.

That means only certain people will get it, who have a certain qualification. God gives grace to the humble, James four and verse six. Do you think everybody in the world is humble? Unmerited favor? It is merited.

Merited means you're going to have some merit to get it. What is that? Humility. The more humility you have, the more grace you will get.

It's not a merit as much as it is a law. You know, it's like water. Water always flows to the lowest place first.

So if you are lower down than others, water will come to you. I mean, you see that in Bangalore when the water supply runs short, the people whose houses are a bit lower down, they get water all the time. The people whose houses are a little higher up on roads and all, their sump dries up.

It's like that water always flows down to the lowest place. And the spirit of grace always goes down looking for the humblest man around and gives him grace. And the next humblest will get a little less and the next humblest will get a little less, but the humblest man will get all of it.

And Jesus got tremendous grace because he walked in humility. So it's merited. Not everybody gets equal amounts of grace.

If it's unmerited, then we get it all without merit. What a deception it is to call grace unmerited favor. There are a lot of things like this, which I find very few preachers expose the fallacy of what Christians have believed for years.

When Copernicus discovered that the earth goes around the sun, people wouldn't believe it. When Galileo, the Roman Catholic man in Italy, when he proclaimed in Italy that the earth goes around the sun, even the Pope opposed him. They said, the Bible says the sun rises and the sun sets.

How dare you oppose the Bible and say that the earth goes on its own axis. And do you know, they said they were going to cut off his head for speaking against the Bible. So they pulled him up and brought him into court to stand before the Pope and say, acknowledge that the sun goes around the earth.

Galileo was a sensible man. He didn't want to lose his head. He said, okay, the sun goes around the earth.

And he sat down and told his lawyer, whatever the Pope may say, the earth still goes around the sun. And today people discovered Galileo was right and the Pope was wrong. And not only him, thousands of people in the world were wrong.

So it's like that, you know, we can say unmerited favor. Everybody says unmerited favor. It's not.

It's something you have, if you're humble, you get it. If you're not humble, you don't get it. So let's see what this grace is in Hebrews in chapter four.

Here's one definition from scripture of grace. It's good to get a scriptural definition. Like we saw a scriptural definition of salvation, destroying the works of the devil.

So here, let me give you two scriptural definitions of grace. One in, it says about overcoming sin in Hebrews 4, 15, it's speaking about Jesus Christ as a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses and our struggles. And which weakness is he talking about? He's not talking about our headaches and stomach aches and physical weakness.

He's talking about our spiritual weakness, which is sin, temptation. We are tempted because we are weak. And it says your Jesus was tempted also so that he can sympathize with our weaknesses.

And that's another thing that devil has blinded Christianity to. He wants to rob you of a high priest who can sympathize with you in all of Christendom. Hardly anybody proclaims this, that Jesus Christ can sympathize with your temptation struggles because he was tempted like you.

The devil wants to rob you of the comfort we get in that and the strength we can get in that by saying, no, no, no, no, no, he was not tempted like us. And he's robbed you of that comfort and leaves you defeated by sin. I know in my own life, I never saw it for 16 years after I was born again.

But when I saw it, that's the time I began to overcome sin. When I realized, you know, when I was tempted as a young man and I understood this truth, I said, Lord Jesus, you were tempted exactly like me when you were in Nazareth, when you were 25 years old. I want to have the same attitude to sin that you had in Nazareth when you walked on earth, tempted like me.

That strengthened me. I've got a high priest who can sympathize with my struggle and temptation. I hope you have one.

It makes all the difference when you are tempted. It says this same priest can sympathize with our struggle and he did not sin, even though he was tempted like us in every point. You name the area where you're tempted.

Jesus was tempted in the same way, but he didn't sin. So there's no more excuse for your sinning because he was tempted like you are. He made himself weak so that he could be tempted.

Therefore, what? Therefore, verse 16, let's come to the throne of grace. First of all, to receive mercy, which is forgiveness for our past sins, which Jesus did not need, but to get another thing with Jesus God, which is grace to help us in our time of need. So here is a definition of grace.

Help in the time of my temptation. Because when it says need here in the context, need is referring to temptation. So this is the first definition of grace.

Help in the time of my temptation. And when Jesus said the Holy Spirit is a helper, he is a spirit of grace who comes to help me in the time of my temptation. That means when I'm tempted, when Jesus was tempted, the Holy Spirit helped him as a man to overcome.

And when he went up to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit so that when we are tempted today, the spirit of grace will come to help me. But it says here, I have to come to the throne of grace and ask for it. You have

not, because you ask not.

Why not start asking in the time of temptation? God, give me grace now. It's getting a bit too much for me. I fear I may lose my temper now.

Give me grace. And you'll be amazed to see how you who were such a slave to your anger, didn't get angry in that provocative moment. Or in some other temptation, when you're tempted strongly to do something wrong.

Maybe you're sitting at the computer and you're strongly tempted to watch some pornographic site. The pressure's building up on you. And you say, Lord, I'm just, give me grace.

Give me grace. And the spirit of God reminds you of Jesus. If he were sitting at a computer, there wasn't one of those days, but if he were, what would he do? Give me grace, Lord, to have the same attitude that Jesus had.

I'll tell you, I'm not talking theory. I've proved it for many, many years now, not one or two years. So this is the first meaning of grace.

Help in the time of my temptation. Let me read that again in Hebrews chapter two and verse 18. Since Jesus, verse 17 first, Hebrews 2, 17, he was made like us, his brethren in everything.

That's another thing the devil doesn't want you to know. And therefore, verse 18, he was tempted. And in that temptation, he suffered by putting his self-will to death.

And therefore, he's able to run to help those who are tempted today. The word original meaning there, he runs to help those who are tempted today. Are you being tempted today? He became like you.

And was tempted like you, so that he can run to help you. Whatever your temptation is, think of the area where you're falling. Think of the Goliath that's standing up in your life and saying, you can't conquer me.

Say to that Goliath, in Jesus' name, I'm going to bring you down. Whether it is anger, sexual lust, an unforgiving spirit, whatever it is, a murmuring habit, that Goliath can come down because there is someone who can come to your aid with grace. Don't let the devil blind you to the true meaning of grace.

The second meaning of grace is in 2 Corinthians, in chapter 12. We not only have temptations in our life, we also have what we call trials, difficulties. Sometimes it could be a physical weakness, which despite much prayer, we have not been healed off.

Sometimes it could be some person persistently troubling us, maybe a difficult son. Some people have a difficult wife. Some people have a difficult husband.

Some people have difficult in-laws, mother-in-laws, brothers-in-law and mothers-in-law and brothers-in-law, all types of people who people have difficulty with. These are trials in our life. Sometimes it's trial that comes in our office, financial difficulties, other type of pressures.

We are living in a world where there's so much pressure, people losing their jobs. That can be a terrific pressure in a time when there's such a lot of unemployment to lose your job. Here it says, Paul had what he called a thorn in the flesh.

He has not defined it so that we can apply to any type of suffering that we have in our flesh. He says, there was given to me, verse 7, 2 Corinthians 12 verse 7, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me. Do you believe that mighty apostles can be tormented by Satan through one of his messengers? Read scripture.

Don't think you're the only one. Don't think that it's because God hates you that you're being tormented. No, maybe it's because God loved you so much.

God loved Paul so much he allowed Satan to torment him. Imagine that. I mean, if you get a really tough question paper, it's certainly prove you're not in the kindergarten, right? If you got a tougher question paper this year than you did last year, you must be in a higher standard.

So if you get a tougher temptation, it's an indication that you're moved up spiritually. God expects more from you. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability.

And if he allows you to face that trial, it means he's got the confidence. My son, my daughter, you can make it. I can trust you.

You're not a kindergarten kid now. You can overcome that. That's why I've allowed it to come to you.

I wouldn't have allowed it to come to you if I felt you couldn't bear it. Don't you trust me? Can't you trust me more than your school teachers who never gave you a question paper beyond your standard? Let's trust him. He sent a messenger of Satan to torment me.

And the purpose was because Paul was in danger of becoming proud. I like the honesty of Paul. He said, brothers, even I was tempted to be proud.

Some of us pretend as though we are never tempted to pride. Who are you fooling? Paul says, I'll tell you honestly, folks, God used me so much, did mighty miracles through me, that I must say I was tempted to be proud. And God had to do something to keep me.

Paul didn't say, I kept myself humble. No, he said, God had to help me. And the only way he helped me was giving me a thorn in the flesh.

The devil tormented me, troubled me, made me, in your case, maybe you would lose your job, perhaps, lose your money, or some other trouble, some sickness. And that really shattered your pride. It pricked your balloon of pride, which you were inflating and inflating and inflating.

God brought you down to the earth because he loved you, because he gives grace to the humble. And God never wanted to be Paul's enemy. The Bible says God is opposed to the proud.

And even if it is Paul, if he was proud, God would have opposed him. But because he loved Paul and wanted to give him grace, he did so many things to keep him humble. And God will do many things, if he loves you, to keep you humble.

I thank God for the many things he's done in my life to keep me low in the dust at Jesus' feet. Many, many things. I'm deeply grateful for that.

He says he fell down there and bowed before God and accepted it. Finally, he prayed first, Lord, take it away, take it away, take it away, no answer. Okay.

And then the Lord said to him, I'm not going to take it away. And listen to this, verse nine, another definition of grace. My grace is sufficient for you because my power is perfected in weakness.

So here is another definition of grace. What is the first one? Help in time of temptation. What's the useless definition we got rid of? Unmerited favor.

We threw that in the trash. Here's the real meaning. Help in time of temptation.

We saw that. And now, power for the weak areas in my life. Isn't that great? Power for the weak areas in my life.

You know, all of us have got different temperaments. We are born with a certain temperament. Some are outgoing, some are inward looking, some are melancholic, inward looking, and some are outgoing and, you know, people who can slap others on the back and say hi, and others who are always so quiet and never can, very shy to speak.

And when the Holy Spirit fills us, you know, each temperament has got its strong points and its weaknesses. These outgoing types, their weak point is they get angry very quickly. And their other weak point is that they'll never do a job faithfully.

But the inward looking people are very melancholic. I mean, their weak point is they're so gloomy. They make you gloomy also when you're around them.

You don't want to be around them anymore. But their strong point is you give them a job, they'll do it more faithfully than anybody else. You know, the great artists and poets and all were melancholic, inward looking people.

But the great fiery leaders who used to lose their temper, they were all the choleric, outward looking people. But when God fills us with the Holy Spirit, you know what happens? He strengthens the strong points in our temperament and helps us to overcome the weak points in our temperament. That means if you're an inward looking, reserved type of guy who can't mix with people, can't speak to people, he'll help you to overcome that and to become friendly, to go out and talk to people and to witness to them.

I was born melancholic, inward looking. But God's changed me a little bit. I've got a long way to go, I'm sure you'll all agree.

But he's changed me quite a bit, I'll tell you. And if your problem is your anger, your outward looking, God can help you there. He can make you faithful, not an irresponsible type of person who can't be trusted with a job.

So whatever is the weak point in your temperament, don't mourn it. Say, grace can help you, strengthen you in your weak areas. Whatever your weak area is, he can strengthen you to overcome it in a trial.

When suffering comes, grace can help you to come triumphant over it with the trial not removed. I heard a beautiful illustration of this from a man of God who was facing a trial and God gave him a dream. And in that dream, he saw himself in a boat trying to cross a river.

But just under the surface of the water was a rock that went long way and he was all the time hitting on the rock, hitting on the rock, hitting on the rock. It was a picture of the trial he was going through in his life, which he couldn't go across, he wanted to overcome it. And he was praying in his dream, get rid of the

rock, Lord, get rid of the rock, get rid of the rock, the way you're probably praying in your life, get rid of that problem in my life, get rid of that boss or get rid of this other thing, get rid of this.

And the rock would not go. And the Lord said to him in his dream, I will not remove the rock, but I will raise the level of the water and you will go through. You want to go through, right? Isn't it a greater thing if God does not remove the problem and makes you an overcomer, then God removes all your enemies and makes you an overcomer? No.

He said, I won't remove the rock. My grace is sufficient for you. You can be an overcomer.

He sets a table, a breakfast table before me in, not after defeating my enemies, but in the presence of my enemies. There's a lot of difference. I mean, if the enemies are defeated, then I'm ready to have breakfast.

But the Lord says, hey, the enemies are there. Don't worry about them. Let's have breakfast.

Let's sit down and relax. Relax, man. The enemies are there.

Don't worry. In the presence, they're right there. I know they're there.

Don't worry. You just sit with me and have breakfast. That is grace.

But the enemies are there, but he makes us overcomers. It's a wonderful thing. So let's know God's grace like this in the days to come.

Help in the time of my temptation and power for the areas of my weakness. Now, these are not just theories and nice little points for us to note down and be excited about. Or maybe you say, hey, there's something I can preach somewhere.

No, first live it. People ask me, Brother Zach, can I preach all the messages you hear on the internet? Do you know there are people who are regularly preaching my messages in different parts of the world? There's some people who just listen to it every morning, every Sunday morning and preach it that day. I said, well, do you know there's a verse in the Old Testament in Jeremiah 23, which says, God is against those who steal the sermons of others.

I don't know whether you know that. God is not only against the proud, but he says in Jeremiah 23, and I am against the prophets who steal my words. That's verse 30, by the way, Jeremiah 23, verse 30.

I am against the proud, and I'm against preachers who steal my words from each other. So what does that mean? And yet, I'll tell you, I have asked people to preach my sermons. I say, if you read, if you hear my sermon on the internet one Sunday morning, preach it that Sunday.

But they say, what about this verse, God will be against those who steal my words? I'll tell you what, how to escape this. You live it, then it will not be somebody else's words, it'll be your words. Got it? So if you hear what I say, and you live it, then it's your words.

You're speaking from your own testimony. Go right ahead. You can preach every sermon you ever heard from me.

You can even make the same three points. I've got no objection. There's no, I got it from heaven.

I don't have any copyright on it. That's why we pass it out free for let the world hear it. Let the whole world hear the truth.

So grace to help me overcome. I can communicate to others. Then thirdly, the third word is faith.

Now, faith is another New Testament word. All these three words are New Testament words. And I want to show you faith, first of all, from, you know, when Jesus spoke to Peter.

But before that, I want to show you what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter seven, and verse, maybe I'll tell you, I got two definitions. I'll tell you Peter's first, Luke chapter 22 first. Okay.

Luke 22, Peter was about to deny the Lord three times. And the Lord said to him, he said that you're going to deny me three times. Luke chapter 22, he told Peter, but he said this, verse 31, Simon, Satan has demanded you to sift you like wheat.

I prayed for you, not that you won't deny me. You will deny me three times that he said in verse 34, you are going to deny me three times. And when you're tempted, I'm not going to pray that you will not fall.

You will fall because you're too proud. You need to be humbled. And sometimes the last way in which God humbles people is by making them fall into sin.

It's not his best way, but that's the last way. If nothing else happens, he has to do that. But Simon, I'm praying for you that your faith should not fail.

That was more important in verse 31, that your faith will not fail that when you have denied me, you know what Jesus said, if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my father. It's a very serious sin. Jesus never said, if you commit adultery, I will deny you before my father.

He never said that it's a sin, but he didn't say he would deny you. He didn't say, if you murder somebody, I'll deny you before my father. Those are sins, but not as bad as if you deny me, I will deny you.

So we could say that Peter committed a sin worse than adultery and murder. I mean, if Peter had committed, murdered three people that night, that wouldn't have been so bad. If he had committed adultery with three women that night, that wouldn't have been so bad.

He denied Jesus three times. I don't even know him. What a terrible sin.

He had hit rock bottom. What would you think of a man who committed three murders in one night or committed adultery with three women in one night? Rock bottom and claiming to be a disciple. And Jesus said, when you hit rock bottom, I'm praying that your faith will not fail.

That means right there, when you're messed up your life, remember that your father in heaven loves you. That is faith. That's the first definition of faith.

It's blessed my heart, and I hope it will bless yours. When you hit rock bottom in your life, remember your father loves you. When you're made a mess of your life, remember God still loves you.

That's the story of the prodigal son. He'd made a mess of his life, ruined his father's wealth and name and everything. But when he just walked back, he saw his father running to welcome him.

The only place in the Bible where God is pictured as running, running to welcome him. And as soon as he says, I've sinned, he says, oh, that's enough, son. No, I don't want to hear any more comments.

Sit at the table. When you hit rock bottom, my brother, sister, remember God loves you. There's a little song I heard once.

It's an old Jim Reeves song of him and his talking to a little boy, four-year-old boy, and says, my little boy, your four-year-old face is a dirty disgrace. That means all types, you know how four-year-old boys can be all mess. And the little boy says, but you love me, daddy.

And then he goes on to say, you wake me up in the morning before I'm ready to wake up, but you love me, daddy. And then he says, when I speak on the phone, you interrupt me, but you love me, daddy. He goes on like that.

You pull your sister's ponytail, but you love me, daddy. He says, you're so hard to scold because you're my dear four-year-old, because you love me, daddy. Have you ever looked up to heaven and said, you love me, daddy? I do that.

I have faith. My faith is not based on my goodness or knowledge of the word, because I have a daddy in heaven who loves me. He's not happy when I fall, but he'll help me when I fall.

And he doesn't want me to keep falling. Some people say we don't preach grace and faith are right in CFC. They haven't heard us.

We preach redemption for the most wicked sinners, for people who have reached rock bottom. If you read my book called The Purpose of Failure, I give my own testimony, how God picked me up when I was at rock bottom myself. And I've learned to be compassionate to people who hit rock bottom.

And I know that there I can say, at rock bottom, I can look up and say, but you love me, daddy. That's faith. Can you say that? If you can, you've understood.

Matthew 7, sorry, Luke 22. That's the first thing. The second verse I want to show you of faith is Matthew chapter 7. Matthew 7, verse 11.

If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more, that's the phrase, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to those who ask him? This is the second definition of faith for me. In my own words, God is more eager to give me what he has promised than I am eager to receive it. What is the first definition of faith? When you hit rock bottom, you have a dad in heaven who still loves you and wants you to come back to him.

It doesn't matter how low you've sunk. That's faith. The second, once we come back to him, he is more eager to give me what he's promised, not things he's not promised like houses and lands.

He'll take care of us. He won't let us sleep on the streets. But there are many other things much more important than that that he's promised.

For example, sin will not rule over you. Romans 6, 14. My grace is sufficient for you.

2 Corinthians 12, 9. I will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability. 1 Corinthians 10, 13. Or be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5, 18. Or Matthew 3, 11. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

Think of that one promise. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. So many people seeking, seeking.

I'll tell you why they don't get. I'll tell you why they're not baptized in the Holy Spirit. Because they believe they are more eager to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit than their father in heaven is to baptize them in the Holy Spirit.

That is a definition of unbelief. And if you're unbelieving, James 1 says, you'll get nothing from the Lord. Well, you've been praying in unbelief all these years.

What is that? I am so eager. I remember one person saying, I've been praying 40 years, brother, to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and he's not baptized me yet. I'm so eager, but my father in heaven is not eager.

Uh-huh. You can pray for another 100 years. With unbelief, you'll get nothing.

Let not that man think he will receive anything from the Lord. James 1. Why not switch it and come to faith, which says, my father is more eager than I am to give me what he has promised. That's faith.

It may take a little while when your heart is saturated with the smoke of unbelief. It's like a smoke-filled room. You know, supposing something caught fire in your room, and the whole room is filled with smoke, you can't just blow it away.

It takes a little while for the smoke and the carbon monoxide and all to clear out. You know, unbelief is like carbon monoxide. You breathe it, and breathe it, and breathe it, you'll die.

You've got to get some fresh air, open the windows, get the fresh air inside. The fresh air is this, to believe that my father in heaven, my dad in heaven is more eager than I am to give me what he has promised. How much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? That's what it says in Luke 11.13. Luke 11.13. How much more will your father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? More than your father is eager to give bread to his child.

This is faith. I hope your understanding of these three words has been revolutionized this morning. Salvation, grace, and faith.

You can get a CD of this message and listen to it again. You probably need to hear it a few times, or watch it on the internet. It'll be up on YouTube in a few days.

The real meaning of salvation, grace, and faith. I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, don't ever forget it and say, Lord, make it clear to me by your spirit. What I've understood in my mind today must sink into my heart and become clear.

Let's bow before God in prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the richness there is in scripture, which makes us rich.

That is your will for us. I pray not just a few, but every one of us here who have come to this church to hear the word of God will receive what you have wanted to speak to them this morning and experience salvation by grace, through faith, the full salvation. We pray in the name and for the glory of our Lord

Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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