

Winning God's Approval - Part 1

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's approval and living a life of faith, trusting in His perfect wisdom, love, and power.

Duration: 44:36

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 11:39

Topics: "Approval"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker announces a series of nine sessions on the topic of winning God's approval. He plans to study characters from the Old and New Testaments who either won or lost God's approval and draw lessons from their experiences. The speaker highlights the importance of seeking God's grace in times of need, using the analogy of a mountain climber who falls but is too proud to ask for help. He emphasizes the need to recognize the seriousness of rejecting God and the temptation to ask for grace. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's goodness and forgiveness, using the example of God clothing Adam and Eve with fig leaves after their failure in the Garden of Eden.

Transcript

Good evening. I want to take a series. I'm going to be speaking the next three weekends.

So, in these nine sessions, services, I'm going to take a study through the Old Testament and New Testament on the subject of winning God's approval and look at different characters who either won or lost God's approval and see what we can learn from them for ourselves. Towards the end of Paul's life, he wrote his last letter and that was to his close co-worker, Timothy. Now, Timothy was the best of Paul's fellow workers.

In Philippians, he said, among all my co-workers, there's no one like Timothy. He doesn't seek his own in anything. He's seeking the things which concern Christ and he's genuinely concerned about the welfare of God's people in the different churches.

A wonderful man of God. And yet, to this man, who is such a wonderful man and Paul's best co-worker, Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2, verse 15. 2 Timothy 2, verse 15, he says, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God.

Wasn't he already approved? Wasn't he born again? But Paul knew that it's easy to once commit ourselves to Christ and years later to be far away from Him. So, from that, I learned that it's something that we need to constantly do. If Timothy, who was perhaps more wholehearted than most of us, or all of us, needed that exhortation to be diligent, to be earnest, to work hard, to make sure that God approves of him.

It's one thing to be accepted by God, but it's quite another thing to be approved. You know, it's like our children. We love all our children and we would feed even the naughty ones, but we're not necessarily happy with all our children.

God blesses all His children, but He's not happy with all of them. And the true disciple of Jesus is one who is not just content that he's going to heaven when he dies, that God's accepted him, but he wants God to approve of him. And if we seek after that, there are some tremendous blessings that come our way too.

God tests us in different situations, and if we pass the test, we get His approval. And if we get His approval, He can accomplish something eternal through us before we leave this earth. And that's going to increase our joy when we get into eternity, when we realize that God could do something through us.

God never is able to use a person before He's tested him. And the stronger the test, the greater the ministry He has for you. You know, when they test aluminum for making airplanes, they put it through severe tests.

They put it in ice-cold water, into the fire, back into the ice-cold water to see whether it's brittle, to see whether it can endure the stress and strain that an aircraft will face when flying in the skies. There's other aluminum used for making children's toys. They don't put that through such severe tests.

So if you're going through a severe test, what does that prove? God's got something wonderful in store for you. A ministry. And if you're not being tested at all, something is wrong.

So testing is not something we should be afraid of. So, if we turn to Hebrews in chapter 11, I want to show you another verse. Hebrews 11 is the great chapter which mentions some of the great characters in the Old Testament.

And at the end of that chapter, it's all about Old Testament people, starting from Abel, the first righteous person whom Jesus called righteous. And at the end of, he doesn't list everybody, but a sample of many others. And at the end of it, he says in Hebrews 11 and verse 39, all these Old Testament saints gained the approval of God through their faith.

Now, faith is not a word that's found very often in the Old Testament. It's much more a New Testament word. But this verse teaches us that even those Old Testament people, they got God's approval through faith.

And it says earlier on in the same chapter, in the middle of that, in verse 6, without faith, it is impossible to please God. We can do a lot of good things, give money for God's work, help the poor, help the needy in the church, and serve in the church in many ways, and even be in the ministry. And yet, if we don't have faith, we don't please God.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. So very often, the test that comes our way, that God allows us to be tested in, is a test of our faith. And we can gain the approval of God through faith.

So when Paul told Timothy to be diligent, to get God's approval over his life, he was stirring him up to live by faith. So, today I want to turn to Genesis in chapter 3 and look at the testing of Adam and Eve. And it's interesting to see that right in the beginning of Scripture, as soon as we read of the creation of man, the very first thing that we read there is that God tested him.

That's right in the beginning of Scripture. And right through Scripture, you find God testing his children again and again. Now, why did God allow Adam to be tested? God had given Adam a free will.

And God could not make Adam holy, as he was holy, without Adam choosing that. If God had not given Adam a free will, Adam would have been like the stars and the planets that move in their orbits without any choice. Many thousands of years ago, God put those stars and planets in the orbit and commanded them to move in a certain orbit at a certain speed.

And every star and every planet has never disobeyed God, even for a split second. We can set our watches by these stars and planets. That is the extent of their obedience.

Split second. God could have made Adam like that. But he'd have been, maybe he'd have looked like a man, but he'd have been no better than a star or a planet.

He could not have been a child of God who could partake of God's nature and become holy. To be holy, he had to make a choice. Because God doesn't force people to be holy.

He didn't force Adam. He doesn't force anybody in the world today. And he's not going to force you and me.

In fact, he doesn't even force people to go to heaven. Look at the millions of people who go to hell every day. God doesn't stop them.

He lets them go. Because each man, we'll discover this one day, that God is a just God, a loving Father. And every person who's gone to hell has chosen to go there.

It may not be clear to us today, but we'll discover it one day. I have no doubt about it. If God caught a man by the neck and said, you've got to come to heaven, well, it wouldn't be heaven.

The person doesn't want to be there. So, God gives man freedom of choice. He gave Adam freedom of choice and he wanted Adam to partake of his nature of holiness.

But for that, Adam had to be tested. And it was a very, very easy test in one sense. There were so many beautiful trees in that Garden of Eden.

Thousands of trees and probably thousands of varieties of fruit. And Adam could have gone and eaten from any of those trees. It was a huge circle that God drew around Adam and said, you can eat any of this stuff here.

There's only one tree outside the circle. Just don't go there. I mean, it would have been difficult if God had said, there's only one tree in the circle you can partake of and you can't take part in any of the other.

That would have been difficult. But it was so easy. All these trees you can take part of, and especially the tree of life, which is right in the middle of the garden.

But this one tree outside, you must not partake of. And the interesting thing we see here is that God never gave Adam a reason. And that's important.

There are reasons behind it, which we can understand a little bit of today. But God never told Adam, now listen, here are ten reasons why you shouldn't eat from that tree. Because God wanted Adam to obey Him by faith.

That's the point. There is an obedience that comes when God has explained all the reasons to us. And there is another obedience which is higher, where we obey even when we don't understand.

How do you want your children to obey you? How do you want your three-year-old to obey you? When you tell them to do something, and he says, well, Dad, give me ten reasons and I'll do it. You'll never get anywhere, because every single thing you ask him to do, he's going to ask you for reasons. You want him to trust you.

You want him to believe that you know better than him what's good for him. But sometimes three-year-olds are not very sure of whether we know better than them. But that's exactly how we are.

We're not too sure whether God knows what's good for us. That's where our faith is tested. So that's why God never gave Adam a reason.

He said, you shouldn't eat of that tree. I'm not going to give you any reason, just trust me. See, what is faith? I want to give you a little definition of faith.

Faith is the total leaning of the human personality upon God in absolute confidence in three things. His perfect wisdom, His perfect love, and His absolute power. It's a confidence in His wisdom, His love, and His power as perfect and absolute.

And faith is just the leaning of my whole personality on God in that confidence. Is that difficult? It shouldn't be. Very often people are looking for faith in themselves.

No, faith is found outside of ourselves in the person we are trusting. It's like, why would you put money in one bank and not in another, which started last week? It's because this one you can trust. And this one you can't trust.

So where is your faith? Your faith is found in something outside of you. It's like that. A lot of people, they say, I don't have faith for that.

I'm trying to work out faith. It's not a question of working it out. It's a question of whether the person, the object of faith, is worthy of faith.

So faith is the leaning of the human personality in total confidence upon God, upon God in total confidence in His perfect wisdom, perfect love, and perfect power. So we can say that the failure of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was primarily a failure of faith. God tested their faith.

Like we read in Hebrews 11. They could have gained the approval of God through faith, but we know they lost it. First of all, they doubted God's wisdom.

It says here in Genesis chapter 3 that when the devil came and tempted Eve. Now let's just stop there for a moment. Remember that God saw Satan coming into the Garden in the form of a serpent.

And He never stopped him. He never stopped Satan from tempting Eve. He never stopped Satan from tempting Jesus.

And He's not going to stop Satan from tempting us. Now that's the first step where we've got to trust God's perfect wisdom. Is it an all-wise God who permits Satan to tempt you or not? Or is that a foolish thing? It can't be.

Now there may be, maybe I can't understand why I'm being tempted. Why God allows me to go through all that test. But the first test is really if I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and that God has become my Father.

Do I believe that His wisdom is far beyond mine? My wisdom is like a drop in the ocean compared to His. And if that is true, I have to humble myself and say, Lord, I may not understand why I'm being tested like this. I may not understand why you're allowing the devil to come and do this to me.

But I believe your wisdom is perfect. And I will not question your wisdom. That is trusting God's perfect wisdom.

That's part of faith. But here we read the woman when she was tempted by Satan. It says she looked at this fruit and it was something that was desirable, it says in Genesis 3, 6, to make her wise.

Do you know what is the great enemy of faith? The Bible says, Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6, it says, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding. Do you know very often the head is the enemy of the heart? If you understand hard or right. Trust in the Lord, not with your head, trust in the Lord with all your heart.

And don't lean on your own understanding. Human reason is very often the great enemy of faith. Now let me clarify that.

Faith is not against reason. Now, some Christians act like that. As if faith is against all reason, they do all types of stupid things and say that we're doing it in faith.

But that's not true in scripture. Faith is beyond reason. It's just like in mathematics.

Multiplication is beyond addition. It's not against addition. It's just beyond.

It's possible that a child who's understood addition in the kindergarten knows nothing about multiplication. But multiplication is beyond it. But it's not against it.

It's the same with faith. Faith is not against reason, but beyond reason. So if we live by reason, we're going to miss out on something higher that God has for us.

And that's the trouble with a lot of people in the world. A lot of Christians. They think, if I can understand that, I'll do that.

Well, you're going to live at a very low level. You're going to live in the kindergarten all your life. If you want to move higher, you've got to recognize that faith is beyond reason.

You've got to recognize that God's wisdom is way beyond yours. And if God has said something, it's good for us, even if we can't understand it. And it's good for me to do it, even if I don't know why.

I can testify to that. I've been a born-again Christian for 47 years. And I've read through this book, and I've tried my best in these 47 years to obey every single thing that I've had light on up until today.

And some of those things I didn't always understand. But I've discovered, as I look back now, God's way was the best. And you will say that at the end of your life, if you don't live by reason, but live by faith.

Faith is to believe that God's wisdom is superior to our reason. So, supposing Eve had said like this, Well, to my reason, it looks as if this tree is really going to do me some good. But God has said no.

Now it's a question of, am I going to trust God's wisdom or mine? And I want to say to you, dear brothers and sisters, Many situations in life, you face exactly the same choice. Shall I trust what God has said in His word, or shall I trust my own reason? It could be some situation where you're tempted to tell a lie to get out of a tight spot. And your reason says, that's the only way to get out of this situation.

You've got to tell a lie. Because a lie is almighty. It can accomplish anything.

The word of God says, God is almighty. Now it's a tussle in your heart. Which is almighty? Is telling a lie almighty? Or my heavenly Father almighty? And you look back into such situations that you faced in the past.

And see which you felt would deliver you out of that situation. You felt in that difficult situation, almighty God could do nothing. But if you told a lie, you'd get out of it.

That's what I mean by trusting in reason. Have we done that type of thing? Then we have failed. But once we see it, we say, Lord, that was a failure of faith.

And that's why I'm not all that I should be today. You know, those little decisions that you take in different stages in your life have determined what you are today spiritually. Your decisions through many, many, many years have determined where you are spiritually today.

And that's what's going to determine where you'll be spiritually ten years from now. Whether you'll be a mature man of God, useful in God's kingdom, a mighty woman of God to serve Him, or just a third-rate, mediocre Christian who drifts along, just a meeting attender, service attender in the church. So that's the first thing.

The wisdom of God is superior to everything that human reason can bring. The second thing here is confidence in God's love. Faith is confidence that God's love for me is perfect.

The devil, that's what the devil was trying to suggest to Eve here. We got to see that the devil is very subtle. There was an insinuation behind his statement.

When he said, has God really said that you can't eat from all these trees? He knew very well what God had said. But he was trying to insinuate to Eve. Look at this beautiful tree.

Can you see how it makes your mouth water? Can you see how if you eat it, it'll make you wise? It's a tree to be desired. Why has God not given it to you? I'll tell you why, he says. Because God doesn't really love you.

He knows that if you eat this tree, you'll be like Him. He doesn't want you to be like Him. See, behind that, he was trying to plant a little seed in Eve's mind of doubt.

And once that seed was planted, the devil had won. He knew he had won. It was just a matter of time now before she would fall.

We must learn something from here. It was a test of faith. When it looked as if, it looked as if what the devil said was true.

Could Eve say no? Could she say to Satan, well, Satan, I don't understand why God hasn't given me. I know it looks very attractive. And humanly speaking, it would have been good if I could eat it.

But for some reason, God has said, I shouldn't eat of this tree. There must be some very good reason. I know one thing.

I know God loves me. And it's in His love that He's told me not to eat of it. So I'm going to trust Him.

Faith is confidence that God's love for me is perfect. Even if I can't explain why He didn't give me that thing which I wanted so much. This happens very often when we are, when some of our prayers are not answered.

You ask God for something, maybe healing from some sickness or some other thing which you desperately need. And it doesn't come immediately. And you wait and wait and sometimes you don't get it at all.

And then the devil puts a seed into your mind. Perhaps God doesn't care for you. Perhaps He doesn't love you.

Perhaps you're just one of the millions of people God doesn't have time for you. Once the devil's put that seed in us, he's going to win. There is where our faith is tested.

And that's the place where God wants us to overcome Satan. The Bible says, this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. There may be so many things around us that we wonder what's going to happen.

So many things which can produce fear, anxiety, doubt. When we watch the news on television or read the newspapers or hear about various things happening. And the world is becoming more and more uncertain.

I tell you this, the thing that will hold us through the darkest days is if we can believe, Lord, your love for me is perfect. There are many things I can't understand, but I know you love me. It's a test of faith.

And that faith is the thing that's going to take us through those dark days. Why does God allow Satan to tempt us? So that she could become strong, so that she could become holy, so that she could partake of God's own nature. That's exactly the reason why God allows us to be tempted too.

He withdraws the sense of his presence. You know, it says here that Adam and Eve were alone. If all God's intention was just to keep them from eating of that tree, that would have been very easy.

Just send one angel with them, they wouldn't have gone anywhere near that tree. Or God himself could have gone with them. You know how easy it is to overcome temptation if you have a couple of believers around us, or even one believer around us? It's when we are alone that we find temptation strong.

And there's a verse in 2nd Book of Chronicles, in chapter 32, which says like this about King Hezekiah. In 2nd Chronicles, in chapter 32, in verse 31, it's a very interesting verse. God left, the last part of that verse, God left Hezekiah alone to test him, to see what was in his heart.

God left him alone. God withdraws the sense of his presence at times, withdraws other believers, allows us to be alone in different situations, and then allows Satan to tempt us to see whether we'll say, Lord, I love you, you love me, I believe that, and I'm going to be true to you. So, when you don't have a sense of God's presence, don't think God's forsaken you.

He's testing you, just like he tested Hezekiah, just like he tested Adam and Eve. And if we pass that test, we gain God's approval, and then God can accomplish his purpose through us. When God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel, at the end of that, this is what the Lord said through Moses.

He listed the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20, and then he said, don't be afraid, Moses said, God has come to test you. That expression comes a number of times. He gave them commandments, just like he gave a commandment to Adam and Eve, he said, now God's testing you.

Very often, when we hear something in our conscience, where God says, I want you to do this, or when we are planning to do something, and our conscience says, that's wrong, you shouldn't be doing it, and you're all alone, that's the time when you're being tested. And that's the time when you need to say, Lord, I'm being tempted now, I don't understand the reason for this, but I'm going to live by my conscience, I'm going to listen to what your word says, because I know you love me. See, that commandment, those commandments that God gave to Israel, were actually an expression of his love.

What does the obedience of faith mean? The obedience of faith means that we believe that every commandment that God has given us comes from a heart of love. Now, we know, I mean, when we tell our children something, we know that it's out of love for them, because they don't have understanding of what's good for them, we love them, and we tell them, don't do this and do this. It's exactly like that, that God has given every single commandment in scripture.

And if we believe that every commandment comes out of God's love, we would obey them. We wouldn't question whether, is this something I have to obey, is this something I don't have to obey. We'd be eager to find out what God's commandments are.

I remember when I became a Christian, I was less than 20 years old, I was so eager to know what God had commanded, because I knew that was for my best. And if from that young age, I decided to do what God told me to do, it worked out for my good. And if you believe in God's love, one proof of it will be that you study God's word to see what God has commanded, because you believe His commandments are given out of love for you.

If you don't believe that, then of course you won't read the scriptures. And that's the reason why many people do not read the scriptures. They're not too sure whether God has given His commandments out of love or not.

They feel, well, I don't know whether that's good for me or not. The other thing I want you to point out here is confidence in God's power. I told you faith is the leaning of the human personality on God in perfect confidence in His wisdom, His love, and His power.

If Eve had felt at that time, boy, this temptation is getting too strong for me. I'm being drawn closer and closer to that tree, and I'm being tempted. You know, exactly like we find ourselves when we're tempted in a particular area.

All she needed to do was to cry out to God and say, God, help me now. I know that you can help me to overcome this. I have confidence in your power.

But she didn't do that. That's why she fell. You remember that time when Peter was walking on the water, and for a moment he lost faith.

He turned around and looked at the winds and the waves instead of Jesus, and that's the moment he began to sink. And immediately he said, Lord, save me. And the Lord stretched out His hand and held him.

That's a beautiful picture of what God can do in every single temptation we face. I want to show you a verse in Hebrews in chapter 4, which says there's a connection here between Jesus being tempted and not sinning. And we are told, therefore, we can also come to the throne of grace and ask and receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

This is in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15 and 16. In Hebrews 4.16, see, this is what Eve should have done. Lord, I'm being tempted so strongly now, please help me.

And she would have received supernatural help. If she had faith, this confidence that God's power is almighty, it can keep me from any temptation, from any attack of Satan, from anything that Satan ever tries to do to me. That's faith.

And Eve didn't have that. She didn't call out to Satan. She didn't call out to God at all.

And that's where we fail too. In the moment of temptation, it's our faith being tested. First of all, as I said, do you believe that God's wisdom is superior to yours? He's told you not to do that.

There must be a very good reason why He's told you not to do it. Do you believe that God's love for you is perfect? That commandment which He's told you to do is out of His great love for you? It doesn't matter if you don't understand, God loves you. And the third is, in spite of all this, if you still feel yourself drawn, do you believe that God's power is almighty to keep you from falling? Here it says, let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

And there, at the throne of grace, we first of all receive mercy. And then find grace. Now, these are two completely different words.

Mercy is an Old Testament word, and grace is a New Testament word. And they mean two completely different things. Mercy is God forgiving us for our past.

Grace is God giving us power for the future. To put it very simply. We need both.

When we come to the Lord, it says here in Hebrews 4.16, there are two things we are offered. And we may come to the throne of grace and go away with just one of them. And that's what a lot of Christians do.

They get mercy. The entire past is blotted out. But there's something more God wants to give you.

Grace. To help you to overcome in the days to come. Grace is not just God overlooking our sins.

That's not it. That's mercy. Grace is God's power to help us in our time of need.

That's what it says here. So, I'm forgiven. God's mercy takes care of my past.

And then, I need to cry out to God and say, Lord, help me. It says here, we've got to find grace in our time of need. Now, one of the best illustrations I've ever used concerning this is, here's a mountain climber who has slipped.

And he's hanging by his fingers from a cliff. But he's too proud to ask for help. He's slipping.

He says, no, I can make it. And he falls down and breaks his bones. Then cries for help.

That's mercy. After we have fallen, the ambulance comes along and picks us up. Takes us to the hospital.

But it would have been much better if while he was slipping, he had said, help, I'm slipping. He would have found arms coming and lifting him up. And putting him on top of that cliff.

So that he need not fall. It's all a question of when you ask for help. And you know from your life that most Christians ask for help after they have fallen.

Broken their bones. Say, Lord, help me. But praise God, he does help us.

You know, Peter could have asked for help after he sank to the bottom of this lake. And said, Lord, I've reached the bottom now, help me. But he didn't do that.

He asked as soon as he was sinking. And that's the time we need to ask. As soon as Satan's temptation to Eve was pulling her.

You know how temptation is. We resist it for a while. And we seem to be overcoming.

But it comes back another wave of temptation. We try to resist another wave. And then it's exactly like we're slipping down the cliff now.

That's the time. That is the time of our need. And it says here, we need to ask for grace to help us in the time of our need.

And if at that moment. Now, if you don't believe me, you try this out next time when you're tempted. Whether you're tempted to get angry with somebody.

And you find yourself resisting it, resisting it. And say, Lord, I think I'm going to explode now. That's the time I need to cry out, Lord, help me.

I'm falling. Don't wait till you explode and your bones are all broken and then call for the ambulance. That's mercy.

A lot of us have experienced mercy. Thank God for the ambulance of mercy always available. But what I want to say is there's a higher way.

There's a better way. If you can trust Him. This is a test of faith.

Do I believe in this moment when the temptation is so great. For me to say something rude. Or to lust with my eyes.

Or to fall into fornication or adultery. Or the pressure is so great. And you know in all these areas.

The pressure is so great. It's exactly what Eve faced there. In that moment of temptation.

And God was, as it were, asking her. Do you love me? More than this thing which I have created. Which attracts you so much.

You know that in every temptation. That is basically the question. Do you want God, the creator? Or what He has created? When a person steals money.

Or cheats. Or tells lies in order to get some more money. He's actually saying.

God, I want what you have created. More than you. When a person sins sexually.

He's saying. God, you don't mean as much to me. As this beautiful thing you have created.

That's exactly what Eve faced. In the garden of Eden. This beautiful tree.

That God had created. And God was testing her. What are you going to choose? Me or my creation? And I want to say to all of you.

In Jesus name. Every single temptation you face. Is a temptation of.

Whether you choose the creator. Or the created. And whenever we have fallen.

In any temptation. It's always been. Lord.

I choose the created. We don't see the seriousness of this. I'm rejecting the creator.

In that moment. And the temptation can be so strong. That we need to ask for grace.

And the bible says. My grace. God says to Paul.

My grace is sufficient for you. In every situation. To overcome.

See the goodness of God. I really love that closing part. Of Genesis chapter 3. Where it says.

Even after they failed. And they made a mess of their life. The Lord comes to them.

They're clothed with fig leaves. And they didn't know. Because.

You've got to forgive them. Because they're the first human beings. They didn't know that leaves.

When they're pulled off the tree. Wither up. They thought they would last forever.

I mean we know that. Because we've got enough experience. But they didn't know that.

So they covered themselves with these fig leaves. And thought they were good coverings. And God who knew better than that.

He took away those fig leaves. He killed an animal. And took off the skin of that animal.

And put it on Adam. And killed another one. Took off the skin of that.

And put it on Eve. And said this is what you need. This will last forever.

The other thing will dry out. And that is the first picture. Way back there in Eden.

Where the Lord was symbolically. Showing. How Christ would die one day.

And his blood would be shed. For their sins. And his righteousness.

Which is pictured in that animal skin. Would clothe them. Far better.

Than the fig leaves. Of human righteousness. Do you know why Jesus cursed the fig tree? Because there's a curse on human righteousness.

It was this human righteousness. With which Adam and Eve were trying to cover themselves. That Jesus was cursing there.

Those fig leaves. God wants to clothe us with the righteousness of Christ. By faith.

This is the New Testament message. That when we come having made a mess of our life. And sinned.

That God doesn't give us up. One of the greatest truths. That we see right from Genesis chapter 3. Is this.

God is always on your side. Against the devil. When you've made a mess of your life.

Or if you haven't made a mess of it. It doesn't make a difference. He's always on your side against the devil.

That's what we see in Genesis chapter 3. I praise God for that. That he wants to take away. If I will only stop justifying myself.

You see these fig leaves are a picture. What do I mean by human righteousness? Just saying, yeah, yeah. But there was a reason why I did that.

And you know how we explain ourselves away. God says, throw it all away. Throw away all your explanations.

Acknowledge your guilt. Don't try to justify yourself. Those fig leaves are human justification.

Saying, I did this because I was under pressure. And I did this because of that. And I did this because of the other thing.

As long as you keep saying that. You can't get the righteousness of Christ. But if you can throw that away.

And say, Lord, I come in simple faith. I acknowledge my guilt. Just like the thief on the cross.

He was immediately clothed with the righteousness of Christ. And so will you. That's the picture in the end of that story.

By faith, I can receive this righteousness of Christ to clothe me. And that's the first step. To receiving the approval of God.

May the Lord help us. Let us bow before God in prayer. While our heads are bowed before the Lord.

A moment of silence. I want to invite you to respond to what you've heard.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19047.mp3>

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