

(Laying Hold on Eternity) Knowing Jesus as Our Lord

by Zac Poonen

Eternal life is a life that had no beginning and no end, which is the life of God, and we can partake of it through Jesus Christ by pursuing the knowledge of God and understanding the truth about eternal life.

Duration: 55:47

Scripture: Genesis 3:6, Matthew 1:21, Matthew 6:33, Romans 6:23, 1 Timothy 6:12

Topics: "The Cross", "Justification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding what Jesus went through on the cross. He explains that Jesus endured not only physical suffering but also the concentrated punishment of an eternity in hell in just three hours. The speaker highlights that Jesus came to save people not only from the penalty of sin but also from the power of sin. He uses the analogy of a father forgiving his disobedient son who fell into a pit to illustrate the concept of justification and forgiveness. The sermon also emphasizes the need to know Jesus and follow his example in living a righteous life.

Transcript

For most Christians, I think eternal life means living forever. And that's how I understood it in my younger days. And when we have a wrong concept of what the Bible teaches, we're not going to experience it in its fullness.

Jesus said, you shall know the truth. The truth will set you free. Free from a lot of bondages.

Eternal life does not mean living forever, because people who go to hell live forever as well. The worms in hell live forever. They don't have eternal life.

Eternal life refers to a life that had no beginning and no end, which is the life of God. And when it speaks about our receiving eternal life, it's not just living forever. When man's created, he's created with a soul that lives forever.

But that we can partake of God's own life. And Jesus defined this in John 17 and verse 3, in this way. John 17, verse 3, Jesus said, This is eternal life.

To know God, the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. This is eternal life. Therefore, it's not something we can just receive in a moment, and we've got it.

Because knowing God is a process that should continue all through our life. And that's why, when Paul wrote to Timothy, in 1 Timothy and chapter 6, to someone who had already known the Lord for 25 years, he writes to him in 1 Timothy 6, verse 12, Fight the good fight and lay hold of eternal life. So eternal life is something we have to lay hold of.

1 Timothy 6, verse 12. And even after 25 years of being a believer, Timothy needed to lay hold of it. So the question I want to ask you is, Have you understood eternal life is just something you got some time ago when you accepted Christ? If so, there's a lot that you're missing in the Christian life.

I want you to know the truth, so the truth will set you free. Eternal life is something you've got to lay hold of. We must pursue the knowledge of God.

The apostle Paul, towards the end of his life, he said this in Philippians, in chapter 3, in verse 10, He already knew Christ, but his passion was that I may know him more. He was not satisfied with the knowledge of Christ that he already had. And I want to say to you, it doesn't matter how much you've grown in the Christian life, if you don't have a passion to know Christ more, to know God as your Father more and more and more, you're not going to make progress in the Christian life.

And that's something you've got to pursue all the time. I've often said this in my home church in Bangalore in India, that for many churches, it's Sunday that's the important day. Sunday morning.

But I said for us, every day of the week is important. That should be a big difference. Sunday is not any more special than any other day.

We've got to know God on Sunday. We've got to know God on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, right through the week. We've got to worship him on Sunday.

We've got to worship him every day of the week. It's an Old Testament concept that you worship God once a week and do what you like the rest of the week. That's how it was in the Old Testament.

They had a Sabbath day when they were supposed to stop all their work and go to the synagogue or temple and praise and worship God. And the rest of the week, they did what they liked. They lived for money and fought and yelled with each other and then came back again on Saturday to worship God.

But Jesus came and changed all that. He said that was only a picture. The Sabbath day was only a picture of how it was meant to be in God's plan where every day was a Sabbath.

Every day we lived and worshipped God. Every day we came to know God in the midst of our secular occupation. It's not just coming to a meeting and singing and praising and listening to a message.

We know God in the circumstances of life. God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us to know him. So, eternal life is to know Jesus Christ.

Our greatest need is not money. It's not even health. Our greatest need is deliverance from sin.

That's the root of the problem. And if we don't deal with the root of the problem and just keep snipping off the bad fruit that appears on the tree, we're never going to be completely delivered from all that Adam got

from the devil. Jesus came, the very first promise in the Bible, in the New Testament, sorry, the very first promise in the New Testament is found in the words of the angel Gabriel to Joseph when he said, Mary's going to have a son and you've got to call him Jesus.

Do you know what that means? The angel defined it in that first promise in Matthew 12:1. You shall call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. Never forget that.

That's how the first page of the New Testament opens in Matthew 12:1. He will save his people from their sins. Now, there are a lot of other things we may need salvation from, from poverty perhaps, from sickness, from unemployment, from lack of housing, many things, but the root of it all is salvation from sin.

All these other problems come because of sin. If there was no sin in the world, there wouldn't be any of these other problems. A good doctor will always seek to hit the root of a disease, not just the symptoms.

Now, a disease like tuberculosis may produce fever, but if you just take a medicine just to remove the fever, it doesn't heal the disease because you keep healing the fever and the disease just keeps growing. And this is the problem with the presentation of a gospel, and we hear a lot of it today, which is dealing with only the symptoms of the disease and not the disease itself. Is God interested in our earthly needs? Yes, He is.

Sickness can be a very serious problem for people who are sick. Poverty can be a real problem. I've seen that in my country.

A lot of my work is in the villages of India, poor villages. Many of our churches, we have planted there, in some places where there was no church for 2,000 years. And I've seen poverty more than any of you have in these places.

So, it is a real problem. But I'll tell you how I have seen that problem solved in the last 25 years in some of the poorest places on the face of the earth. It's by teaching them to seek the kingdom of God first.

It's not by giving them handouts and helping them all the time. This is not theory. I've proved it.

In fact, when we started our ministry many years ago, one of my great desires when we started our church 32 years ago in India was, I say, Lord, I want to prove in my lifetime that Matthew 6:33, which says, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other needs of yours will be added to you. I want to prove in my life that that's true. That it works in the 20th century.

It works in the 21st century. And it works in the poorest places on the face of the earth. And I want to tell you today that I've seen it proved, not only in my life, but in the lives of many others, hundreds of families.

So I have seen that it's a deception of the devil to get people to concentrate on deliverance from poverty and sickness and to preach a gospel that tells you that Jesus will make you healthy and wealthy. Those are the byproducts of being saved from sin. You know, I'll tell you this, that if you're saved from poverty and you become a millionaire and you're saved, healed from all your sicknesses and you haven't got rid of your anger, you're still going to go to hell.

You know, that's right. And that's not me who said it. It's not me who said it.

I want to read that to you in Matthew chapter 5. Listen to the words of Jesus, words of Jesus which you may not hear much about. Matthew chapter 5, He said, I say to you, Matthew 5 verse 22, He equated

anger with murder. He said in verse 21, You heard the ancients say that you shouldn't commit murder, but I say to you, everyone who is angry with his brother, he's talking about anger, is guilty.

Guilty before the court. That's when his anger is in his heart. And when that anger flows out of the heart, overflows through his mouth, and he says raka, which means you fool, you empty head, he'll be guilty further before a supreme court.

And then if it boils over further and he gives him another bad name, says you fool, he'll be guilty enough to go to hell. Who said those words? Anger is the first of three steps to hell. That's what he said in that verse.

So what's the use being delivered just from poverty to say that God has blessed me with money, to God has blessed me with health. Is that what he came to save us from? Did the angel Gabriel tell Joseph, you shall call his name Jesus because he's going to save people from poverty. That's not what he said.

He's going to save people from sickness. Those are byproducts of his saving people from sin. He came to save us from sin.

That's why he died. We should never forget that. He's interested in our other needs.

But Jesus said your heavenly father knows what you need. But he came to save us from sin. We must never forget that.

And so we need to understand how is it that Jesus is going to save us from sin. First of all, he has to save us from the guilt of sin. He has to save us from the mess we have made of our life.

And that is why he died on the cross. And he died on the cross and rose again not only to forgive us but to justify us. In case you don't understand those two words.

I want to explain it so that everybody here understands it clearly. Forgiveness is God saying okay, the guilt of your sin is removed. He can't remove it unless somebody has paid the price.

And that's why Jesus had to die. You know, God is a righteous judge. Not only a loving father but he's a righteous judge and he can't let us go if we have committed a crime just because he loves us.

I mean a son can't stand in a court and if his dad is the judge and say dad, don't you love me? Let me go for this crime. He can't do that. And the foundations of justice in the world would be removed if God stopped being just.

You know, many people when they think of God as a God of love they don't realize that love includes justice. For example, if you love one son of yours a child of yours a lot and he is hammering his younger brother and you want to punish him for doing that and you say dad, don't you love me? Yeah, I love you but I love that other son of mine too. And if you're going to trouble him then I have to discipline you.

That's why there is a hell. I heard a story of is hell an expression of God's love? When you punish one son because he's harming the other one is that an expression of love? Of course, it's an expression of your love for the other child of yours. I heard of a story of a man who couldn't believe that a God of love could ever create hell.

He said that's impossible. One day somebody kidnapped his only daughter raped her murdered her and he was never caught. This man's opinion changed.

He said if God hasn't created a hell he has to create one for somebody like that who escaped justice on the earth. God is a God of justice. There are millions of people who have harmed others who have committed crimes who escaped justice on this earth but they're not going to escape it forever because God is a God of love.

He doesn't just love you. He loves your wife and you better not hurt her. He loves your husband.

Don't hurt him. So don't just think of God as a God of love for me. It's because God is a God of love for the other person that he's a God of justice.

And that's why our sin when we hurt others when we harm others it's a crime against God and we need to be forgiven. And that's why Jesus died on the cross to take our punishment so that we don't have to face it. He was forsaken on that cross.

When he cried out my God, my God why have you forsaken me? I'm trying to get you to know Jesus Eternal life is to know God and to know Jesus Christ whom he sent and why he sent him. And I need to lay hold of this eternal life. I need to know clearly what happened on the cross.

If we don't understand clearly what happened on the cross and we're just sentimental about it and get emotional when we see pictures of Jesus hanging on the cross and being whipped, etc. We're not going to be freed from sin. We need to understand what actually happened there.

When he cried out my God, my God why have you forsaken me? I tell you I have meditated on that for a long time. If you understand that you'll hate sin with all your heart. If you understand what Jesus went through in those three hours on the cross it's the only time in his entire life on earth that he looked at heaven and said my God.

He never called him father at that time. Only once he called him God. All his life he referred to him as father and he would talk to him as father, father, father, father except once.

When he hung on the cross he called him God. Have you ever thought about that? Why was that? Because there he was standing in your place and my place before the judge of the universe he was standing facing the the punishment that a righteous holy judge of the universe demanded for our sin. Because God knows the future he could see the sins you're committing now he could see it two thousand years ago.

That's why he could put that punishment on the cross on Jesus on the cross. Every sin that we've ever committed God already saw it way back then in eternity. And he put it on Christ on the cross.

And I've thought about this you know was it only physical death that Jesus suffered on the cross? Is physical death the punishment for our sin? If it is then when I die I pay the punishment for my sin. You see how ridiculous it is? Every man dies and if that is the punishment for sin then he's paid the punishment. But the punishment for sin is not physical death.

It's eternal death. And eternal death means being forsaken by God. The only God forsaken place in this universe is hell.

And that's what is the worst part of hell. It's not the fire and the worms. It's the fact that God is not there.

And we don't understand what it means to be in a place where God is not there. There's no part of this earth where God is not there. God is there.

His mercies are there. Even on the worst people on earth God's presence is there. But in hell it really is a God forsaken place.

It's being forsaken by God for eternity. That's the punishment for sin. And then we understand what Jesus suffered on the cross.

When he hung there. When he said My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? He was really experiencing it. And you know that's the only time when Jesus asked a question when there was no answer from heaven.

Every prayer of his was answered throughout his life. Immediately. But here was one prayer.

A prayer. Why have you forsaken me? And there was no answer. Shall I tell you why? Because God doesn't answer the prayers of those whom he has forsaken.

You know we need to understand what Jesus went through on the cross. It was the concentrated punishment of an eternity in hell that was concentrated into three hours on the cross. It wasn't just physical.

It wasn't just the whipping that you see in that film The Passion of Christ. That was nothing compared to what he went through which can never be portrayed in any movie. Those three hours that he went through being forsaken, being cut off The Bible says that the father is the head of Christ as the head was wrenched off at that time.

It's very difficult for us to understand. But as I began to understand what he went through for my sin, I tell you the effect it had on me. I said Lord, I never want to sin again.

If that's the price you had to pay. If that's what you had to pay in order to deliver me. That load was for him who bears the universe a load too heavy for him to bear.

My sin. Your sin. When you see it, you will understand that the forgiveness for our sins was not cheap.

It's free. But it's not cheap. Don't ever forget that.

Eternal life is to know Jesus Christ. The price he paid for our forgiveness. The Bible says in the last verse of Romans chapter 4 that Jesus was raised again for our justification.

Now that's another word which many people don't understand. Our forgiveness and justification the same? They're not. These are legal words.

God is a righteous judge. And if we understand these words it helps us in our relationship with God. First of all, forgiveness.

I told you. That's removal of the guilt of our sin. Because sin deserves punishment.

And Jesus took it. Can we now that our sin is forgiven stand before God? Supposing this moment I have confessed all my sins and because of Christ's death all my past is forgiven. I still can't stand before God.

Because there's so much sin still in my flesh. When we are born again there's still sin in our flesh. And we behave so badly thereafter.

I mean haven't you seen the way believers behave around you? You don't need any more proof that there's sin in their flesh. Or haven't you seen how you behave? After you were born again and after you were baptized. Even if all our sin is forgiven we're still unfit to stand before God because of sin in our flesh.

And that's why we need something else. We need to be justified. And justified means justified by the righteousness of Christ means that the righteousness of Christ it clothes us.

It covers us. We're clothed. Imagine a white robe.

The righteousness of Christ being put upon us. And then God sees us as he sees Jesus Christ. Think of that.

He sees me as he sees Jesus Christ. Because I'm clothed with the righteousness of Christ. That's the meaning of justification.

It's more than forgiveness. Now I'm declared righteous. How righteous? As believe it or not as righteous as Christ himself.

Many Christians haven't understood that. And that's why they're so afraid to come to God. Oh, but there's still so much sin in me.

Well, if you haven't confessed the sins you've committed then of course you can't go before God. The only sin that God doesn't forgive is the sin you don't confess. That's all.

I hope you know that. Every sin that you confess and acknowledge and don't put the blame on your wife or husband or somebody else like Adam did, you'll be forgiven. It's when we put the blame on somebody else and say, well Lord, you know it's this wife of mine who gave me this fruit and you're the one who gave me this wife.

That's why Adam was kicked out of paradise and that's the way to get out of paradise yourself. Blame your wife. Blame your husband.

Blame somebody else. Blame your neighbor. Blame God ultimately.

But on the other hand learn a lesson from the thief on the cross who lived such a wicked life but at that last moment, just before he died he said, Lord, I'm guilty. I deserve this. Oh really, Jesus? You can come to paradise today.

You can be with me in paradise. Paradise is made for those who take the blame themselves for their sin and who don't blame anybody else. But it's so difficult.

It's so difficult. Try taking the blame in your home. And try stopping blaming other people.

It's very difficult. We've got the nature of Adam right in us. We can all learn a lesson from the thief on the cross who was saved.

Lord, I'm guilty. I deserve this. That's the way to enter paradise.

So if our sin is confessed and forgiven, we also need to recognize we are clothed now with the righteousness of Christ that we can come boldly to God now. Can you imagine how boldly Jesus could come to the Father when he was on earth? He could ask the Father for anything. How boldly can Jesus go to the Father today? Do you have any doubt in your mind about Jesus having some hesitation to go before his Father or something like that? No.

He could go boldly to the Father at any time. Why? Because he was perfectly righteous. Can you believe it? That you can go to the Father in exactly the same way? This is what it means when we pray in the name of Jesus.

For many people, when a person prays in the name of Jesus, all it means is that's the end of the prayer. We can say Amen. It means a lot more than that.

It means that I come in the person of Christ. Clothed with the righteousness of Christ Father. That's why I'm asking for it.

I don't deserve it. I remember many years ago when I asked God for some... It was some little material thing for my home, for my family. A real need not luxuries.

And I said, Lord can't you do this for me when I've served you for so many years? And the Lord said no. And I learned something that day. I was coming in my name.

I have done so much for you. Won't you do this for me? And the Lord says no. You've got to come in the name of Jesus and say, Lord I deserve nothing.

Even if I've served you for 50 years I deserve nothing. But because Jesus died for me I come. Father says sure.

You can have it in that case. It's all a question of how you come. And I don't mean just using the magic words in the name of Jesus.

I don't mean that. We're not talking about mantras that non-Christian religions teach. No.

We're talking about a whole attitude where I come before God recognizing that there's nothing in me. Paul said towards the end of his life in my flesh there dwells nothing good. That's the greatest apostle in the first century who said that.

Then how was he accepted? Clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We need to know Jesus Christ. We need to lay hold of this eternal life so that we have boldness of access when we come before God.

You know so many years of my early Christian life was wasted in hesitation and fear to come before God. Can I ask him for this? Can I ask him for that? Because I wasn't told clearly what justification was. I was told Jesus died for me.

Your sins are forgiven. But nobody explained to me the truth. If somebody had, I would have been free a lot earlier than I did become free.

I want every one of you to be free. If you have confessed your sin, I want you to know that you can be justified in Christ. Forgiveness is only half the story.

Justification is the other half. And it's quite likely that some of you have probably understood it for the first time this morning. Your life will be free when you understand that.

You can have boldness when you come before God. You remember that story? That parable that Jesus taught about a whole lot of people invited for a wedding? And they made one excuse or the other that was referring to the Jewish nation. They didn't want to come.

And the king said, this is my son's wedding feast. Go out into the highways and byways and pick up all the beggars and the lame and the sick people and the lepers and bring them in. And at the gate everybody was given, you know these were beggars in rags.

You can't come into king's wedding feast in rags. So at the gate everybody was given this beautiful white robe. The beggars were delighted.

We don't have to go in here in our rags. We can go in this beautiful white robe. But there was one fellow who came along with a nice suit and tie and he said, I don't need that robe.

I'm okay by myself. He went in without that robe because his dress he thought was good enough. He wasn't in rags.

He wasn't a beggar. He was a big executive. And he sat there in the feast with everybody dressed in white and this man sitting in his suit and tie.

And the king came and looked over and said, how did that fellow get in here without a robe? And it says the king said, take him out and throw him into the outer darkness. You know what is the message of that parable? That no matter how holy you think you are you can't get into the king's feast without the robe of Christ's righteousness. You with all your holiness are down at the same level as the worst prostitute in the city.

With all your holiness you are no better than the worst criminal. The person you despise the most. You are no better than Hitler.

No better than Osama Bin Laden. Or whoever you think is the worst sinner. You got to have the righteousness of Christ if you want to enter the king's feast.

But that's not all. Jesus came to save us not only from the penalty of sin. He came to save us from the power of sin.

What did the angel say? You shall call his name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins. Not he shall forgive them and leave them in their sins. He shall save his people from their sins.

And one of the best illustrations I like to use for that is supposing I have a 5 year old boy and I tell him hey son they're digging the road outside our house doing some repair work there and there's a deep 6 foot pit there. Don't go anywhere near it. And like all little children they disobey.

And he goes and falls into the pit. Poor 5 year old boy inside that pit and he cries out daddy daddy and I come running and say daddy I'm sorry. I disobeyed you.

Please forgive me. And I say ok son you're forgiven. Goodbye.

Have I forgiven him? Yes I have. Have I saved him? No. Do you understand the difference between forgiveness and salvation? Very often we ask are you saved? And the reply we give is I'm forgiven.

When I ask you are you saved? Are you saved from your anger? Are you saved from lusting with your eyes? Are you saved from the love of money? Are you saved from jealousy? Are you saved from complaining? Are you saved from murmuring? Grumbling? Are you saved from fear? Are you saved from anxiety? Are you saved from hatred? Are you saved from backbiting? Are you saved from empty criticism of others? Are you saved from stabbing people in the back? Are you saved from climbing on people's shoulders and pushing them down so that you can go up? You say no none of these things. Then what are you saved from? Oh I'm saved from hell. Do you know that there's no such expression in the bible as being saved from hell? Nowhere.

Take a concordance and have a look. You won't find it. You shall call his name Jesus, the angel said, because he will save his people, not from hell, but from their sins.

As a byproduct, they escaped hell. But he came to save us from our sins. He didn't come to forgive us and leave us in the pit.

He came to save us. To lift us up. Otherwise this wouldn't be a gospel.

Imagine if I were to give a tract, a gospel tract to a non-christian whom I'm trying to witness to about Christ. A non-christian who doesn't know anything about Christ or the gospel. There are many like that, different religions.

And I tell him, you know this, Jesus died for our sins. And if you receive him, he'll forgive you. He says, that's great.

But he says, I have other problems in my life. I have these addictions. And Jesus, I get angry.

I fight at home. And he asks me, do you think Jesus can save me from all that? And if I haven't experienced deliverance from that, I say, no, no, no. Jesus can't save you from all that.

But he can forgive you your sin. And what do I do if I yell and hit my wife tomorrow? Well, just ask Jesus to forgive you. And what if I hit her the day after tomorrow? Just ask Jesus to forgive you.

And what if I keep on hitting her for the next ten years? Just ask Jesus to forgive you. He'll say, I don't want this. This is no gospel.

What type of gospel are you trying to preach to me? I can never be delivered from all these bad habits of mine, but I'll just keep being forgiven? Is that the gospel? No. He came to save his people from their sins. The name of Jesus is blasphemed in every nation on earth today because Christians have not proclaimed by their life that Jesus can save from sin.

They've only proclaimed that Jesus can forgive. I know because I when I left my job in the Navy in 1966, I spent nine years traveling all across India, north, south, east, west, and I went to different denominations, mission stations, places where so many missionaries had come and worked. And I saw everywhere, the problem was the quality of the life of Christians.

And you know, I found many Christians were complaining, oh, we're only 2% of India's population, 98% are non-Christians. It's so sad we're only 2%. And I said, boy, thank God we're only 2% of this quality of

Christians.

Imagine if it were 50% of this quality of Christians. What a disgrace if it had been the name of Christ. We need to improve the quality of Christians before we increase the percentage of Christians.

So I decided at that time that God was calling me to preach discipleship. Evangelism is necessary, very necessary. But evangelism without discipleship, I've discovered, brings dishonor to the name of Christ.

And that's because we're not encouraging people to lay hold of eternal life. We've told them Romans 6 23, use our logic, and said Romans 6 23 says the gift of God is eternal life. What do you do with a gift? If somebody gives you a gift, you just say thank you very much, and then the Bible is mine for the rest of my life.

But eternal life is not like that. You can't use logic when you come to scripture. You can use logic when you're studying math, but not when you come to scripture.

Eternal life is not something I just receive once and have it. Paul told Timothy 25 years after he saved, lay hold of eternal life, Timothy. You've got to know God better.

You've got to know Jesus Christ better. Now I want to tell you the good news that Jesus came not only to forgive our sins, not only to justify us and give us boldness before God, but to deliver you from every wretched thing you got from Adam. Every wretched sinful habit.

When Adam opened his heart to the devil, the poison of Satan came in, the poison of pride and jealousy and selfishness, and every wretched thing, and we've got it. And Jesus came to deliver us from it. He came to save us from it, and that's why he sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts so that we can be delivered from it.

So to know Jesus Christ, to know him as my savior, the one who's died for me on the cross is not enough. There are many titles of Christ you know in the Bible, but I want to tell you about the title of Christ now which I think most of you, my guess is most of you have probably never heard of. You know him as a good shepherd, you know he's the bread of life, you know he's the light of the world, he's the resurrection and the life.

There are many many titles of Christ, he's savior, good shepherd, everything. But have you heard this title of Christ? Our forerunner. That's not found in the Gospels, it's found in Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 20.

We need to know Jesus not only as our shepherd, our savior, we also need to know him in Hebrews 6 20. This is what it means, part of what it means to know him is to lay hold of eternal life. Jesus has entered within the while it says, as a forerunner.

Jesus has entered in to the most holy place as a forerunner. A forerunner means just what it says, one who has run in front of us. And when you link that with Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 1 and 2, you understand it better.

Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 and 2 it says, the last part of verse 1, it lets us run with endurance this race that is set before us. Verse 2, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God. How are we to run this race? Looking at our forerunner who ran this race in front of us, taking up the cross,

despising the shame that was in his earthly life, and now at the right hand of God.

So when we look at Jesus, we need to look at him in two areas. One in his earthly life, where he despised the shame and endured the cross. And secondly, where he is today at the right hand of God.

We need to know Jesus, the way he lived on earth, and where he is right now. He ran the same race that we are called to run. I remember when they were training us as cadets to become officers in the Indian Navy.

They made us do every single thing in the ship that the sailors who worked under us would have to do. We had to do everything. We had to hang down on the ship's side and scrape the paint and repaint it.

We had to scrub the decks. We had to do every single thing that a junior sailor that one day we would command would do. Before we had to fire the guns, we had to do every single thing that they had to do so that we would know what they had to go through.

And then we were qualified to become officers. When the Bible says that Jesus is the captain of our salvation, he couldn't possibly be the captain of our salvation if he didn't face every temptation we face. He couldn't say, follow me, if he makes us walk a more difficult path than he himself had to walk.

He is the captain of our salvation. And that's why the Bible says he was tempted in every point as we are and didn't sin. That's in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 15.

To know Jesus Christ better, to lay hold of eternal life means to know Jesus Christ more fully. Hebrews 4 15 says, we don't have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses. You know, very often when we are going through struggles, we say, Lord, do you understand what I'm going through right now? And the Lord says, yes.

I've been through it myself. He was tempted in every single point that we are. Not in the same circumstances, but with the same temptations.

Jesus never faced road rage, driving a car. But he faced the same temptation in different circumstances, maybe from his younger brothers or other people in Nazareth. And Jesus didn't have a drunken father, but he faced the same temptation that a child faces from a drunken father in a different set of circumstances.

See, all of us, our circumstances are not the same. But our temptations are the same. We're all tempted to be impatient.

We're all tempted to be selfish. We're all tempted to be proud. We're all tempted in various ways, to murmur and grumble against our circumstances.

Jesus, think of this, Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. But he didn't sin. Have you ever been tempted to jump off a bridge? Commit suicide.

You know that the devil tempted Jesus to jump off the roof of the temple? Temptation is not sin. He was tempted, but he said no. He was tempted in every point as we are.

God allows us to will never allow you, let me tell you the good news. He will never allow you to face a temptation that Jesus has not faced before you. He's your forerunner.

This encouraged me so much. I understood this truth about 16 years after I was born again. But it made all the difference in my life.

Because you know it's a lot of difference between being taught the theory of sanctification, and there are many many theories. And there's a difference between that and seeing an example. It's like if I were to teach you swimming on a blackboard here, how to move your hands and how to breathe and say okay go jump in the river now and swim.

I think you'll all drown. But if I were to say come follow me, let's see how I go across this river and say do what I do, isn't that easier? Oh it's much easier to have an example than to get a hundred exhortations. An example is better.

That's the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament they had laws. And somebody counted them up.

There were 613 laws in the Old Testament. Not just 10 commandments. The book of Leviticus, numbers and all that.

Imagine 613 laws. How in the world can I remember all that? But then Jesus replaced all of that and said just follow me. That's so simple.

I just got to look at his example. And I know the times when once I understood this truth and when I faced some severe temptation in my life as a young man I would say Lord sometime in Nazareth you face this too. This temptation I'm facing right now.

Whether it's a temptation to lust or to murmur or to criticize or to be jealous or to be proud or anything and I want to have the same attitude of mind right now that you had in Nazareth 2,000 years ago to that temptation. That is how I see the footsteps of Jesus and put my feet in them and follow him. It's possible when you see that you have an example in front of you and not just someone who gives you exhortations.

He says follow me. Follow me. So he was tempted in all points as we are and he didn't sin.

How is it he didn't sin? Only by one power and that was the power of the Holy Spirit. That's all. He did not use his divine power as God.

This is one of the most important truths about Christ that believers need to understand today. There are two truths about Christ. One that he is fully God the second person of the Trinity existed from all eternity and the other truth is that when he came to earth he became fully man.

He is fully God fully man. He is not 100% God and 50% man. That's a heresy.

He is 100% God and 100% man. We don't have to figure it out. We don't have to figure out.

I don't need to figure out how my digestive system works for it to work. In fact I don't know how it works but it works. The important thing is not understanding.

And so I don't need to understand how can somebody be fully God and fully man. I say Lord I just believe it because your word says that. He is not someone who cannot sympathize with me.

You know I believe that God with his great heart of love could definitely sympathize with man but you know it's like you're sympathizing say with somebody whose child was run over and killed yesterday in a road accident and you've never experienced that yourself. I'm sure you can sympathize but not as much as you would be able to sympathize if your own child had got run over sometime and been killed. Don't you think such a person would be able to sympathize a little better? That's why God came down as man so that he could sympathize with us as a man.

That's the wonderful thing that Jesus became a man just like us. Exposed himself to temptations just so that he could be our example. There was no need for him to come.

He came because he loved us and he wanted to be an example for us. And this is the principle of all Christian leadership. I know times when I've gone through some circumstances and I say, Lord, why is it like this? This is the only way you can be prepared to minister.

The way of Christian ministry is not by just going and sitting in a Bible school and cramming our head full of Bible knowledge. It's by going through different circumstances where we're tempted to in different ways and we overcome. That's our ministry to other people because they're facing the same temptation.

I know all the temptations you face even though I may not be a prophet because I know the temptations I face and the same ones you're facing. That's the principle of Christian leadership and that's how Jesus led. He was tempted, he overcame by the power of the Holy Spirit and he says, follow me.

And he's come to save us today from all our sins. And when he saves us from our sins, one of the byproducts of that is he takes care of our earthly needs as well. Do you think Jesus is not interested in a man getting a job to support his family? Of course he is.

How could a father in heaven not be interested in his child having enough money to live on this earth? That's impossible. Now I'm telling you this is what I preached in the poor villages in India for poor people for years and I've seen it work. It works.

If you honor God and say, God I'm going to live by the principles of your word, God is a loving father. He's a compassionate father. He's not one who, you know, I'll give you an example.

Many people in non-Christian religions don't understand how good a God a father can be, a heavenly father can be. I remember one man who was from a non-Christian religion who accepted Christ and all his life he was selling milk to a poor villager. He had one cow and he was, like all the other milkmen in India, they add water to the milk and sell it.

So he did that for years and then he got converted. He got converted. Some people when they get converted they still add water to the milk but he decided to be different.

He decided to be really converted. And he realized that I can't cheat other people like this now that I'm a Christian. So, he said Lord I'm so sorry for all the years that I sinned against you like this I vow that I will kill my cow as a punishment for all the sins that I committed.

You see, you don't understand this. This is the non-Christian concept of forgiveness. I have to suffer for my sins.

I have to kill my cow. You don't realize what a wonderful truth it is that I don't have to suffer, that Christ suffered enough for all my sins. It's an amazing truth.

Many of us have grown up knowing this from childhood and you don't realize what a wonderful truth it is. But this person didn't know that. He thought he had to kill his cow and made a vow that I'll kill the cow.

Then all of a sudden a little later he realized, hey, I've got only one cow. If I kill it, how am I going to live? Fortunately, two or three days later, he was at a conference where I was speaking and he came up to me and said Brother Zach, what shall I do? I said, you don't have to kill your cow. Jesus died for all your sins.

Killing your cow is not going to help. But he said, that's not the thing. He said, I made a vow before God.

And the Bible says you make a vow before God and you've got to keep it. What do I do now? I said, God's a loving father. I said, if your little five-year-old boy one day gets upset and says, I'm going to leave this house and I'll never stay here again.

What do you do? Hold him to his word? If he comes back the next day to you and says, Dad, I'm sorry I said that. And you say, no, no, no. You said you were going to leave this house.

You better leave it. Keep your word. No, we know that five-year-old children say stupid things.

Even 15-year-olds and 20-year-olds say stupid things. But So I said, God's a loving father. He knows that sometimes his children say stupid things.

And he doesn't take it seriously. So don't hold yourself. Oh, I made a vow.

God knows that was a stupid vow you made. Forget it. He's a loving father.

You're forgiven. Come to him freely. Jesus is our example.

What a wonderful thing to have a father like this. What a wonderful thing it is to know God as a father like this. To know Jesus as our example who not only hung on the cross to pay the price for our sin, but showed us in his life on earth how we can be overcomers and never allow the devil to have any power in our life or in our home.

Tell me, why in the world would you not want to surrender to such a wonderful savior? Don't you want to surrender your life to him? I, praise the Lord, my life's been so happy. I surrendered my life to God nearly 50 years ago. The only regret I have is that I didn't yield it earlier.

I am one of the happiest people on earth. I mean, I've been looking around for people happier than me. I haven't found one yet.

I really mean it. And I don't mean just on Sunday morning. And I'm not, this is not a sales talk I'm giving here, trying to sell something.

I'm not, I'm selling nothing. Everything in the Christian life is free. So there's nothing to sell.

But it's true, your life can be revolutionized. Your home life can be changed. Your life, your work life can be changed if you surrender to this wonderful Jesus.

Make him Lord of your life. Don't just receive him as one who forgives your sins, but say Lord, I owe my whole life to you. I want you to be Lord of my life and I'm inviting you to surrender to him.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. While our heads are bowed in prayer, if it's forgiveness you need, stop blaming others and say, Lord, I'm guilty. I'm a sinner.

I am the sinner for whom you hung on the cross. If you think you're holy, recognize your holiness is not good enough for God's presence. Say, Lord, I need the righteousness of Christ to clothe me.

I want to be justified. If you have been forgiven and justified and you need to be saved from your sinful habits, Jesus can do that for you too. Say, Lord, I want to make you Lord of my life.

I want to yield every area of my life to you. I want you to fill me with your Holy Spirit and give me grace and power to follow in your footsteps. And help me to know God is my own Father who will take care of all my earthly needs as well.

Thank you, Father. I pray for those who are, according to their need, praying to you right now. I pray that we will all know you, Lord Jesus, a little better as a result of what we've heard today.

But we shall lay hold of eternal life and know you better and better each one year. We pray, Father, in Jesus' name.

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