

Sanctification and Humility

by Mack Tomlinson

Sanctification is a lifelong process of growing in Christ, and humility is a key aspect of this process.

Duration: 41:19

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:4-10, Matthew 4:1

Topics: "Humility"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that all punishment and wrath for our sins were poured out on Christ at the cross. He explains that God disciplines us out of love to correct and change us, making us more dependent on Him. The preacher then discusses the importance of keeping God's commandments and warns against forgetting Him in the midst of the sinful and rebellious world we live in. He highlights that God leads and provides for His people, feeding them with spiritual nourishment that the world cannot understand. The ultimate goal of God's provision and leading is to humble His people and cultivate dependence on Him.

Transcript

So it's always a joy and an honor and a privilege to be with you. And thank you for your kindness to me. And come to Denton and see us when you can get away.

We would love to house you, have you there with us. So we praise the Lord for your church and your example and your love for Christ. I'd like for us to look in the Old Testament this morning.

The book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy chapter 8. Deuteronomy is about wilderness journey. God gave Israel the book of Deuteronomy when they were in their wilderness journeys.

And of course spiritually, redemptively, for us it's truth that pertains to our journey in sanctification. How we start out after we're justified by faith and we are joined to the Lord Jesus Christ and union with Him. That's the beginning of our journey.

That's the beginning of sanctification. And sanctification, unlike justification, is not a one-time deal, is it? Justification, we're justified freely forever, once and forever, made right with God, peace with God, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness on our behalf. That's put upon us and God declares us forgiven, innocent, justified, declared righteous.

And that's permanent. That can never change. Nothing can alter it.

Your struggles, your sin, your unbelief, your battles do not change in any way your status in justification. That's the gospel. But sanctification is a different animal, if you will.

Sanctification is a process, isn't it? Where we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ all the days of our life. You cannot have sanctification unless you've been justified in the first place, right? And you cannot have justification ever in a person's life that does not result in sanctification. So these are Siamese twins.

They're joined and God never separates them. And so part of our sanctification process is in a big way, it's not only growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, it's renewing our minds, as Romans 12, 1 and 2 says, so that we're not conformed to this world. But it's also mortification, putting to death the deeds of the old man, putting to death the deeds of the flesh.

And so a great part of our mortification is at times, for some, not just dealing with sins of the flesh, whether that be drunkenness, drugs, dependency on things, sexual immorality, sins of the flesh, but Paul also talks about the sins of the spirit and of the mind, envy, jealousy, anger, impatience, foolish words, and pride, and a lack of humility. No unconverted person is humble. Every unconverted person is dominated by pride.

It fuels their entire engine. Pride is the lubricant that oils the whole machine of a lost person. Everything is controlled by and driven by pride.

Even you think about wealthy people today who are not believers, there's wealthy people this past week that have given a million dollars toward the Houston flood relief, a million dollars they gave. But does that earn anything before God if they're not in Christ? No. It's a good thing to do.

It'll help. But pride can drive that because they'll think others are going to think better of me. Others are going to like me.

This really helps my PR. This really helps my image in the community. The Bible talks about men naming lands and buildings after themselves, right? Trump Towers, New York City.

Rockefeller Center. You know where I'm going. Pride drives a lot of this.

And as a Christian, much of our work in sanctification gets down to mortifying and putting to death our pride that still is resonant, still is a battle. So Deuteronomy 8 speaks about this. God has purposes in us as He is with us, as He guides us, as He provides for us, as He cares for us like a father over the children and family that He loves.

As He leads us, God also does something else. Let's read Deuteronomy 8. We'll read through verse 16, 1 through 16. All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do in order that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give you to your forefathers.

Now just remember, as we pause for a moment, the land for the Christian is not only heaven, it's not only a full inheritance in Christ. It's already ours. God had promised them the land.

It was already theirs. They had to go in and possess it, right? They had to take it. But part of our land is full conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, fully becoming like Him in spirit, in heart, in motive, in thoughts, in

desires, in words, in actions, in character.

The Holy Spirit is always producing. Holy Spirit produce in the garden of our lives. He's always growing fruit.

When I come down to the... Is this considered the valley? No. Okay, I'm sorry. Don't get upset at me.

But I love the produce from the valley. Last year when I was in Laredo or somewhere, I got some big grapefruit, and they were unbelievable how good they were. You can't get them up in North Texas.

So this sweet fruit that God produces in us of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith. And the next phrase in Galatians says, Against such things there is no law. You ever wonder what that means? Here's what it means.

The fruit of the Spirit cannot be produced by self-efforts of law-keeping and performance out of our own flesh. The fruit of the Spirit has to be produced by the Holy Spirit in us as we seek Christ, as we trust and obey. Leonard Ravenhill loved to sing that hymn, Trust and Obey.

And I remember many times after the song would be over, he would say, Remember, if you don't trust and obey, you'll rust and decay. Well, we have to trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

And part of that trusting and obeying is putting to death our pride. So God has given us this land. We're to go possess it.

All right. Verse 2. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

You remember where that scripture is quoted in the New Testament? Huh? Wilderness temptation of Jesus. Now think about this. Jesus is in the wilderness being tempted.

That's His wilderness experience. And three times when Satan tempts Him, Jesus quotes three times from Deuteronomy, the book of truth God gave Israel in their wilderness temptation and journey. And so the Lord Jesus lived this like Israel had to.

And it says in verse 4, Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you as a man disciplines his son, not punishment. Someone recently emailed me or called me and said things are so hard.

Is God punishing me? And so I knew they were a true believer. And I said no, God doesn't punish His children. They were punished at the cross.

All our punishment, all our wrath is poured out on Christ on the cross. He disciplines us now in love to correct us, to change us, to make us more dependent on Him. So here as a man disciplines his son.

Therefore, verse 6, You shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains

and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. Now verses 10 through 16 is the heart of our text.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today. Lest when you have eaten and are satisfied and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold multiply and all that you have multiplies, then your heart becomes what? Proud.

Proud. And you forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. He led you through the great and terrible wilderness with His fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water.

He brought water for you out of the rock of Flint. In the wilderness He fed you manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you, that He might test you to do you good in the end. God has purposes of grace in our sanctification and our growth.

And they almost are always unchanging. Now, think of your growth and grace if you're a Christian. Have you been a believer two years? Twenty? Fifty? Six months? It doesn't matter.

Every Christian grows at the pace God wants them to. He wants every believer to grow. Every believer will grow because the Holy Spirit is in them always at work.

But the pace at which we grow and the ways in which we grow and the things in our lives that cause us to grow will vary. No one's going to grow just like you do. Don't you put a standard on others to say, well, they're not growing in the same way they are, so they must be in sin.

Well, they're this or they're that. And don't compare your growth with anyone else's. And don't compare others with you because God has a unique, custom-made plan for your growth.

And He will bring you along at your pace as you're able to take it and as you're able to grow. But the fact is, we're all growing and we're all in this wilderness. Our job is to make sure we trust and obey.

God's work in us is to cause growth by the Holy Spirit. It is God, Paul said, who is at work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Therefore, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

What God has worked in you, salvation, a new heart, a new spirit, a new life, a new identity in Christ. What God has worked in, now you and I have to work out in our sanctification. And so, notice what God did here.

One of His great purposes was all through the wilderness God was doing some things for the children of Israel. And all through your journey now as a Christian, God is doing some things in you and for you. I want you to notice verse 15.

He, first of all, led you. As many as are the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. God has led you.

He's always leading you. As a child of God, you are led by your Father in Heaven. He keeps you.

He guides you. He directs you. Sometimes He hems us in where we can't go one way and He opens a door another way.

Thank God for the doors He shuts. We would have opened. It would have been wrong.

He knows the way we take. He knows what you need. He knows where we need to be.

He knows what saints we need to be with. He knows what pastors we need to be under. He knows where we need to be for truth.

He knows what we need in our lives for His glory and our good and our growth. And He will lead us down a certain path. He leads us, the Bible says, in the path of righteousness.

He leads us, Psalm 23 says, for His own namesake. He leads us. You are today, if you're a believer and you love Christ, you are being led.

Moses said, He led you through the great and terrible wilderness. And listen, that's what this world is. Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God? No.

It's a great and terrible wilderness. It's a, as Bob Jennings used to say, it's a waste howling wilderness of darkness, of sin, of evil, of rebellion, of demon activity. This world is not my home.

We have to be here. We have to grieve as we journey over what's around us. We have to resist.

We have to take to heart what John the Apostle says. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

And the world and all its pleasures and all its pride and all its pomp and all its foolishness, the world is passing away. But he who does the will of God abides forever. So, we are being led through this great and terrible wilderness of this world.

Do you ever get tired of it? I promise you the longer you live, right, brother Jim? The longer you're in this world, you get... I mean, he and I are in the same boat. We're in the same boat. Here we are, later in our journey.

And you get tired of this world the longer you're a Christian in it. You're weary of it. And it's more and more God weaning you from this world, preparing you for heaven.

And so, we are led. Verse 15 says, He led you. Do not ever doubt as a believer God has led you.

Now, have you made mistakes? Yeah. Have you misinterpreted things? Yes. But God is greater than our mistakes.

He's greater than our flesh where we want something and we try to manipulate it and we don't get it. God is greater than all that. And He even uses our mistakes and He even uses our sins, ultimately, to get us where He wants us to go.

He led you. He led you. Well, notice secondly, verse 16.

Well, no, let's don't go to 16 yet. Verse 15, the bottom. He brought water for you out of the rock.

He brought water for you out of the rock. As He led you, God provides spiritual nourishment of life and refreshing. There's a hymn.

I can't quote the whole stanza probably. All the Way My Savior Leads Me. What have I to ask beside? Can I doubt His tender mercies who through life has been my guide? Though my weary steps may falter and my soul a thirst may be, gushing from the rock before me lo, a spring of joy I see.

Suddenly, when you're thirsty and you're dried up spiritually, God will bring to you suddenly a spring of living water, a fresh encounter with Christ, a word from God, from Scripture that comes alive and ministers to your heart. A brother or a sister encourages you and suddenly your heart is drinking in water that you need right then. He brings out of the rock of Christ to us water of life right when we need it.

He does that in our journey in your sanctification. But notice verse 16. He not only has led you, He not only brings water out of the rock for you, in the wilderness, He feeds you.

He feeds you. He feeds you with manna. He feeds you with living bread.

He feeds you with bread that this world knows nothing about. People out in the world, your family members who aren't Christians, they don't get it. They don't understand you.

They don't understand why you like church. They don't understand your obsession with the Bible. They don't understand you're not loving to party anymore.

They don't understand. They cannot understand you because their minds are blinded to the truth. They do not know what makes you tick.

They just think you're religious now and it will wear off maybe. They don't understand you because God feeds you inwardly in the heart with manna that is from above that this world cannot understand. Jesus said to the disciples, I have bread to eat.

You know not all. My bread, my food is what? To do the will of Him who sent me. So God has led you.

God has quenched your thirst. God has fed you. Get this next phrase in verse 16.

In order that the goal, in other words, the goal of feeding you and leading you and providing for you, the goal is that He might what? Humble you. Ah, not punishment. Not even humiliation.

God's purpose is to work into us humility by causing us to be dependent on Him. The proud person says I can handle it. I'm smart.

I'm independent. I got my act together. I'm conscientious.

I'm on time. I pay my bills. I can handle it.

Self-independence is a grievous sin against God. And God humbled Israel in the wilderness by causing them to be absolutely dependent on Him. If He didn't send the manna, they were in trouble.

If He didn't cause the water to flow out of the rock, they were in trouble. They stayed the same place until the pillar of cloud or the pillar of fire began to move. God was teaching them utter, genuine, daily dependence to cause them to develop humility that He might humble you.

And one of the great signs of grace in a person's life is when God is working with kindness progressively, humility, and dependence on Him. That He might humble you and that He might test you. Why does God test us? Why does He allow trials? Why does He allow things to be hard that make us afraid, that make us feel stress? Uncomfortable situations we don't like.

Lord, why are we in this situation? Why have You suddenly given me all these children that I look forward to, but now I don't think I can handle it? Why am I in this boat? Why, why, why, why, why? That He might test you, notice, to do good for you in the end. It says also later, I think in this chapter somewhere, it says He does this in order that we would be humbled and that He might continue to bring us into the land to put His fear in our hearts. Humility, God working in us, humility is His great purpose.

And He guides us and feeds us and leads us and provides for us to make us dependent, to make us experience that without Him we can do nothing, to cause us to constantly live in dependence on Christ. This is humbling. He humbles us to do good for us in the end, to bring about good in the end.

Now I want you to think about in a broad way how much the Bible emphasizes this humility. You read through Proverbs, it's a good thing to read a chapter every day of the month, 31 chapters in Proverbs. So reading the Proverbs on the day of the month.

And it's amazing how much Solomon speaks about humility. But in the end his pride got him because he loved many foreign women and they led him into idolatry. So ultimately he had a bad ending.

But what he wrote is inspired, and it's true, Proverbs speaks in an amazing way about pride and humility, about the proud person and the humble man. Proverbs 15 says this, The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and before honor, before blessing or getting into some position God wants you to have, before honor comes humility. God cannot entrust to some of His children more blessing or responsibility or more positions because He can't trust them with it.

It would go to their head. They don't have the humility it takes to handle more responsibility. Before honor comes humility.

Proverbs 22, The reward of humility are riches, spiritual riches, honor, and life. Truly enjoying loving life. Psalm 10, This is a wonderful promise to the humble soul.

The Lord hears the cry and the desire of the humble person. The Lord, when you are broken, and your heart is broken, when you're humbled before God, and your heart is just aching and goes up to the Lord and you're crying out, He hears the cry and the desire of the humble person. It's a wonderful thing.

Proverbs 16 says, It's better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to be with the proud. You know what? I would rather be with saints for a week that love Christ and love each other and have a godly spirit and a humble spirit than to be on a cruise ship for a week with the most famous people in the world. It's better.

The Bible says it's better. It's better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly. I want you to turn to Isaiah 57 and see this promise of God to those who are humble.

Isaiah 57 is a marvelous verse and it's a marvelous promise. Isaiah 57, verse 15. God dwells in two places, the Scripture says.

In a high and lofty place, He inhabits eternity, but He also dwells in another place, especially, verse 15, Isaiah 57. For thus says the High and Exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell on a high and holy place. And also with who? The contrite and lowly of spirit.

In order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. God dwells in majesty above, infinitely, somewhere. Christ is enthroned out there somewhere.

But God also especially dwells with and abides with and is near the humble and the contrite. He opposes the proud, but He draws near and gives grace to those of a humble spirit. Cultivate this spirit.

Cultivate it. Go for it. Long for it.

Make it your desire. Lord, work in me more and more a spirit of contrition, a spirit of humility, a spirit of tenderness, a spirit that doesn't see myself as important, but views the brethren as more important than me. That esteems and appreciates the grace you see in others.

I've seen real grace among you this weekend and it's, bless me, serving and desiring fellowship and hungry for truth. That radiates from believers and it's radiating from you and it blesses others to see a humble and a hungry spirit. God says, I dwell with such a person.

Well, remember what Jesus said. Do you think Jesus knew anything about humility? The most humble man that ever lived. Perfect humility.

Never, never gave in to pride. He was tempted with pride, never gave in to it. Look, if you jump off the pinnacle of the temple, they'll know you're Messiah.

Come on. Satan took Him to the pinnacle of the temple. Look.

Come on. Jesus was tempted with pride as a man. He didn't give in.

Perfectly humble every hour of every day of His life. And the Lord Jesus commenting on humility said this. The greatest among you will be the servant of all.

Now listen to this. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself, not humbled in that first way, God is able to humble men and it's a measure of humiliation. Whoever exalts himself, self-centeredness, God will humble them.

But whoever humbles himself, God will lift up. Better to not exalt yourself lest God humble you. Better to humble yourself and let God lift you up.

You read those portions in Colossians and Ephesians where Paul talks about put to death these things that are in you, anger, wrath, malice, bickering. Those things he talks about that happens sometimes in relationships, they only come from pride. A humble person controls their temper.

Humility is great strength. It's easy to lash back in words when you're hurt by someone's words. It's easy to respond on Twitter, Facebook, say something you shouldn't, you click the button and it's gone forever.

I've seen families' relationships destroyed by Facebook or social media. It's easy to just speak and let it out. Real strength is self-control where you don't say or do what you're feeling inside.

You mortify that. And humility is self-control in action. I had someone comment to me, a preacher.

He said, Are you going to reprint the book on Leonard Ravenhill? I said, I don't know. We're praying about it. He said, I had a Pentecostal preacher talk to me and that preacher said, You didn't speak near enough about miracles and the power of the Holy Spirit in the book.

Well, I wasn't sure if he read it because there was quite a bit about the power. But you know what I felt? I felt defensive. And I could have responded.

I could have said, Well, this, this, and this, but the Lord checked my heart and said, Don't respond. You don't need to respond. It doesn't matter what his opinion was.

The book wasn't perfect, so own it. You know, if you left something out, you could have included. But the point was, we so often can be tempted to respond back in the flesh when we ought to resist it and humble ourselves.

That's self-control. Solomon said, A man who controls his spirit is greater than a military commander that captures a city. That's quite an amazing thing to think about.

Humility has real power. And so, it's just wonderful to think about this. Proverbs 15, The fear of the Lord is wisdom and before honor comes humility.

How much do you see the Lord working in you deeply to produce more humility, more kindness, more graciousness, more wisdom, more realizing, I don't know what I think I know. I'm not yet where I need to be. I don't see myself accurately, so I need the body of Christ to help me grow in grace.

I need to be taught much more. How much humility is God working in us? Now, I said last night, humility is our responsibility. Peter said, James says, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.

We must choose to humble ourselves. But you know what else is true? Deuteronomy 8, God leads us and feeds us and quenches our thirst and tests us that He might humble us. So one of the wonderful things to pray in your prayer life is, Lord, think of the Holy Spirit.

Think of all He does. He dwells in you as a believer. He's renewing your mind.

He's always at work in you. He's with you and He's in you. He teaches you.

He opens your eyes to see truth. He expands your mind to understand more. He comforts you.

He strengthens you in your weary journey and you find strength to keep going when you don't think you're going to have it. He helps you. He speaks to you.

He will strengthen you in prayer to give you more of a prayer life. The Spirit of God does all these wonderful things in our sanctification, but one of the greatest things is He works so as to humble us to produce more humility. And one of the marvelous things as a Christian, you and I should pray for more.

Lord, give me more of the Holy Spirit. More of Your influence. More of Your empowering.

More of Your anointing. More of Your graces. And Holy Spirit, produce in me more and more humility.

Lead me and feed me and water me and test me that I will become the humble believer You want to make me. There's a lot of pride that's yet to be mortified. There's a lot of land that's yet to be possessed.

But God's given you the land. Go possess it by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 says if you by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, you will live and flourish.

So this is our inheritance, brethren. The beauty of humility, the grace, the ornament. Didn't Peter say that this humility for a woman, the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, is in the sight of God the most beautiful thing a Christian lady can have? Yes.

But guys, humility looks pretty beautiful on you too. It's for all of us. Get decked out in, dress every day in humility.

He has shown you, oh man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you. Somebody tell me. We heard them last night.

To do justly. To love mercy. And to walk humbly with your God.

Walk humbly with God all your days. And things will go well with you. Christ loves you.

He's your great shepherd. He's the great shepherd of the sheep. He's your keeper.

He's your leader. He's your feeder. He's your waterer.

He's your tester. And He is your humbler. But He does it to do you good all the way to the end.

Praise God. Amen. Let's pray.

Father, apply this word in our hearts. Let it sink deep in our minds, in our spirits, in our hearts. Don't let it be robbed.

Don't let us forget it. But work this deeply in us, Lord, that you would produce and we would walk in more and more true humility as we trust and obey and as the Spirit is at work in us both to will and to do of your good pleasure. Lord, bless this dear church.

Take them on with you. Encourage them. Use them.

We thank you that you're with us. In Christ's name, amen. God bless you.

And thank you for letting me be here. Pray for us when you think of us.

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