

Poverty of Spirit

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the necessity of experiencing a genuine relationship with Christ, characterized by humility and a transformative faith.

Duration: 1:03:11

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-20, Romans 8:29, Hebrews 1:1-2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Personal Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the importance of not only seeking and proclaiming the truth, but also experiencing a personal relationship with God. He emphasizes that Christianity is not just an intellectual pursuit, but a religion of experiencing God's life and power. The speaker describes the ecstatic worship and joy that comes from encountering God and the constant growth in understanding His beauty and glory. He also raises the question of what true evidence of Christianity looks like and encourages believers to strive for a deeper relationship with God.

Transcript

Before we go to our text, I want to just summarize something from this morning. We were in Ezekiel chapter thirty-six, and one of the things that the Lord has impressed upon me, I believe, in these meetings, is in many of the people who may run in some of the circles in which we run, we seem to be very concerned, preoccupied, and rightly so with truth, with speaking forth the truth, identifying the truth, defining the truth. But I'm afraid that that is only a small part of the truth's relationship, or our relationship with the truth.

There is a sense in this Christianity, since it is not simply an intellectual endeavor, there is an experience. It is a religion in which we experience, a relationship in which we experience the Lord, we experience His life, we experience His power, the power of conversion. It is not dead orthodoxy.

It is not simply being prim, improper, and quite adequate in all we think and do, but it is the living, resurrected Lord and our relationship with Him. And that the word that keeps coming to my mind is this word, to challenge you, is reality. That it matters very little and it is of very little worth for you to profess a certain truth.

Do you declare yourself to identify with that certain truth? The question comes down, is it a reality in your life? Progressively, is that truth capturing you? Is it being manifested in your life? Because of our desire to

be theologically correct so many times, when we hear preaching, we'll simply say, yes, I believe that. And then that's where it stops. That's where it begins.

Do I believe this? Yes. OK, is this a growing reality in my life? Because if it's not, just because I believe it does not mean that I'm without need of repentance. And just because I believe it doesn't mean that I'm actually converted.

There are many men that I am sure can define theologically certain things, even though they be unconverted, they can do it better than the converted person. But the question is, is it a reality in your life? I remember several years ago, I was preaching in a thing called the Whitfield Fellowship in Detroit. And afterwards, we went out to eat and I was sitting around with these men.

And this waiter came up to us, a young man. He looked to be somewhere in his early 20s and he had necklaces everywhere and little bracelets on. And the tips of his hair were all painted blonde or something.

And he saw my Bible on the table. And he goes, dude, you got a Bible. And I said, yeah, I do.

He goes, man, I got one, too, because I was looking for God and looking for God and looking for God and seeking God and seeking God. And I found him. And now like God and me are like, I'm walking with God.

And and he started saying all this stuff and he went on. And I looked at all those theologians sitting around me. And it so grieved me because I knew what every one of them was thinking.

He didn't say anything right. He wasn't looking for God. Some of you thought the same thing.

He wasn't looking for God. God was looking for him. And I looked at those men, I said, you know, it's a lot better to have it and not know what to call it than to know what to call it and not have it.

The point is theology in the study of Scripture many times does not necessarily create a work in us. But describes the work that God has done in us and teaches us to understand it. So it really doesn't matter if you're homeschooled and it really doesn't matter if you know all the answers.

And it doesn't really matter if you've gone through the catechism since you were little. The question is, do you experience the life and the power of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ? And that's what we're getting. We were getting at this morning in Ezekiel when he said certain things that I just want to bring to mind.

First of all, he talked about vindicating his holiness, that the reason why he was going to save the nation of Israel was to vindicate his holiness, to prove to the nations that he was God. And I asked the congregation this, does your conversion so disturb the unbelieving world that they have to attribute it to something? Does the unbelieving world look on you and at least realize, now they might misinterpret it and they probably do, but do they realize that something has happened to you? That something external has acted upon you? Has the word fanatic ever been used? And then in Ezekiel, he tells the people, he says, I will take you from the nations and gather you into your own land. Here's the question.

Is there a reality of separation in your life? Can someone point and point, actually point and look at your life, certain things in which it is noticeable that God is separating you from the ungodly, unbelieving world? And not only did he say he'll take you out of the nations, but he said he'd gather you into your own land. Can someone look and see that not only is God separating you from ungodly practices of the heathen, but God is drawing you unto himself and creating in you a passion and a longing for God and the things of

God? Because if not, you should be afraid. You should be afraid because this is not some unique experience to super spiritual Christians, but it is the experience of every true born again believer.

And then he goes on and he says, I'll sprinkle you with clean water and you will be clean. I was talking about the sovereignty of God, not simply in election and justification, but the sovereignty of God and sanctification. This same sovereign God who saves men according to his will also has determined to sanctify every person he says you will be clean.

Can you point in your life? Is there the reality that this God that you say has saved you? Can you point and demonstrate in your life that that same God is working to cleanse you of all your filthiness and to destroy your idols? Do you sometimes feel that you're literally a prisoner? Held captive by God and that he marks out everything before you and behind you and that the word of God comes to you with convicting power, that God is constantly dealing with you to make you holy. And it goes on and we talked about the supernatural nature of being born again, of regeneration. And why do we do that? Because of the born againism in this country, everybody who thinks they've walked down an aisle, raised a hand or prayed a superstitious evangelical prayer, they believe themselves to be born again when the fact of the matter is being born again, being saved is more than just making a human decision to jump out of the line going to hell in order to jump into the line going to heaven.

It is a supernatural work of God whereby the very power of God is manifested to a greater degree, I believe, than the very creation of the universe. And then and he says, I'll put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. Is it a reality, the direction and the leadership and the working and the conviction of the Holy Spirit in your life? Many of the things that I've mentioned in this short summary, short summary is totally foreign to the average church member, completely and totally foreign.

So these were realities that we looked at this morning. And now we're going to look at another passage of Scripture that carries on this thought in this time in the New Testament. And I want us to go to Matthew chapter five.

Let's go to verse 13. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. For the most part, when I see this text either preached or treated in a commentary, it is treated as a separate unit away from the first 12 verses of this text.

And I think that that is completely and totally wrong. We have books written on, you know, coming out of the salt shaker and on to the world. We have books about we need to be we need to be the salt of the earth.

And it's preached in sort of a militant sort of way that we as Christians need to get out there and we need to get involved in politics and we need to get involved in culture. We need to have a purifying influence because we're salt. Well, so much of that is true in a sense, but that that's not what Jesus is saying here.

I don't believe it's what Jesus is saying at all, and I think it's one of the reasons why the evangelical culture in America is so superficial and impotent because we're not really understanding what Jesus is saying. He's not talking about militant social activity or even the militant preaching of the gospel. I think he's talking about something quite different now, as you know, in the providence of God and in the teachings of Christ, where we may direct ourselves onto one certain purpose in what we say and do.

God has this ability to to work out an infinite number of things with one act or with one word. And that's what's going on here in this teaching, in the sense that that to some this means one thing to others, it means quite another thing. To the unbeliever, we see something here to the false professor, those who believe themselves to be Christians and are not.

It says so much, even to the believer, it's a warning. Now, what does this text mean? You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, what happens if it becomes tasteless? How can it be made salty again? Now, I don't want to get into chemistry at all because I didn't do very well at the university in chemistry and I'm going to use terminology that is not proper. So if you're a chemist, please don't come up to me afterwards and scold me.

But there are certain characteristics or properties or elements, we'll use all those as synonyms that make up salt. OK, make up the thing we call salt. Now, if you take those properties, those characteristics, those elements, if you take them away, if you remove it from if you remove those key essential elements from what you call salt and you take them away.

You no longer have salt. If you take them away, you can still call it salt, but it's not salt because salt has certain characteristics, and if this substance no longer has those characteristics, it's not salt. You can take them away and you can replace them with things, even other things that may be good, but you no longer have salt.

So there are certain essential elements or characteristics that make up salt. They're essential. You take them away.

You no longer have salt. So stop calling it salt. I believe that's what Jesus is teaching, that there are certain essential characteristics to discipleship.

And I don't want to use that word because we think today that there are Christians and then there's this higher group of Christians called disciples. There are essential identifying characteristics to the Christian, to being Christian. There are certain things that you want to look for that really show us whether or not someone is a disciple of Jesus Christ and they're not militant activities, but they are things of nature.

They are things, characteristics of the very person themselves. And what are those characteristics? What are the essential things that make up what a disciple is? What are the characteristics of a true Christian? Now, before we go into that, let's look at this. When the Bible speaks about things, especially in First John and such, about certain characteristics of a true Christian, obviously it's not speaking about perfection.

It's not it's not saying that the the true Christian walks perfectly in the light. It's not saying that the true Christian perfectly always identifies sin in their life and perfectly and and without without any mistake confesses it. It's not saying that the true Christian walks just like Jesus all the time.

But what it's saying is these characteristics are noticeable in the true Christian. They are realities. There are realities that may start small, but they will be there and they will be growing because he who began a good work will finish it.

And so as we look at these true essential characteristics of a Christian, without which you are not Christian. The question you have to ask yourself is this, are these things a reality in my life? Am I making progress in these things now before I go any further and identify these? I want you to think about something I was I was preaching a while back in Texas and this church was without a pastor. And I

preached my first sermon there on on Sunday morning.

And and I came down from the pulpit and was greeting people and a group of people came up to me and they said, you need to be our pastor. And I looked at them and I thought, what's the best way to put across the biblical truth? I looked at them and I said, are you all I was in Texas, so I could say that. Are you all completely out of your mind? And what do you talk? I said, you heard me preach one sermon.

You don't know how I treat my wife. You don't know what kind of father I am. You do not know anything about the sins with which I must struggle.

You know nothing of what is required. You know nothing, and yet you want me to be your pastor because I spoke well today. You see how we identify Christianity, we identify true Christianity with activity and a parent.

I can't use the word real, but apparent success in ministry, the ability to talk. But don't you understand? Ever since the devil entered into the garden, it's been the liar that's the best speaker. This is not about, you know, he's a man of God.

How do you know that? Well, look at the way he talks. He's a boy, this is a work of God. How do you know? Look how many people are here.

You ever gone to a Jehovah Witness Convention? It's a lot of people there, too. Well, he's a man of God. How do you know? Well, I mean, he's casting out demons.

He's prophesying. He's doing many miracles. Yes.

And he could hear, depart from me, I never knew you. Well, I'm a Christian. How do you know? Well, I asked Jesus to come into my heart.

What is the evidence? What is the evidence of true Christianity, of true discipleship, of of a man or woman of God, a teenager of God, what is the true evidence? What are the things that we should be looking for? And also, if we are Christian, this is the most important point. If we are Christian, what should we be striving for? What are the things that we should truly be striving for? I remember when I was a young man and knew the Lord had called me into the ministry. Now I was striving for power.

Down on my knees, you know, Lord, power to preach, Lord, power to preach like Whitfield. Maybe I should have prayed for power to be as humble as the man who carried his bags. What should we really be seeking to be in this Christianity of ours? And what is it that God esteems? Is it true that the Spurgeons and the Whitfields and the Edwards and the great minds and the great preachers are in some inner circle that I'll never belong to because I wasn't gifted in the same way? Are those the things that bring man reward on that great day? Because those are the things that we honor.

Those are the things we honor. But I'm not so sure they're the things that God honors. God can make donkeys and rocks talk, but he wants more.

So what are these essential characteristics? Well, I think they're found in verses three through 12 of the very things. Now, I'm going to say something you might it might bother you. The very things that you ignore.

If you're like the average Christian, even the godly, there are things ignored in our culture. In our Christian culture and in our churches. And yet they are things utmost.

They are things essential. Let's begin in verse one. I want to show you something very important.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, the mountain. Why did Matthew put mountain? I mean, it's OK to say mountain and you could call it a mountain, but it'd probably be better to call it something else, maybe not quite as big as a mountain. I mean, it really wasn't that big.

Why did he use the word mountain? I believe there's a very important reason. Many, many years prior to this, there was a prophet who went up on a mountain to receive a law. And what Matthew is putting before us on this day is the one who gave the law on that mountain to Moses is now the one seated on the mountain.

And opening his mouth to teach us, I am afraid that many of our doctors and many of our teachers give greater emphasis to what Moses was given than what was given through Jesus Christ, our Lord, the great interpreter of all things. Even what Moses said, one greater than Moses, one greater than the Levitical priesthood, one greater than all is now going to sit down and he is going to open his mouth and teach us. It is all written in this form.

Why? In order to show the great importance of what's being done here. We as Christians, now listen to me, are so concerned and rightly so with setting forth truths such as justification by faith and how that is worked out, propitiation and all the great doctrines that are constantly being attacked and in our circles, we so emphasize these things that I believe the teaching that's being given here. With Jesus on this mount is basically ignored in our midst, it's basically ignored.

It seems like always Christianity goes to different extremes. You've got the reformers over here and their whole thing is the theology, the theology, the theology, justification by faith, getting clear the doctrines and everything and on and on and on. And you have over here, you have your more Mennonite and your Anabaptists in these groups are constantly saying life of Christ, life of Christ, life of Christ, imitating Jesus, imitating Jesus.

And what happens? If both groups go awry, correct theology. Will always lead, if it is correct. To a burning doxology or worship of God.

And to a solid praxis or practice of truth. In God desiring and planning and doing one great thing, what is that? Does he say that in Romans chapter eight, that his great sunam bonam, his greatest good, his great purpose for his people is that they all become powerful preachers or that they all know what Edwards knew? No, that they be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, that is God's purpose for us and truth in itself is not an end. It is a means, it is a means to worship and a means to conformity to the image of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me ask you a question. Is this a reality in your life? Could anyone look at your life for any moment of time or period of time and discern that you have a passion about being conformed to the image of Christ? Because my dear friend, so many good things can take the place of the most excellent thing. You know, he's got a passion for missions.

He's got a passion for truth. So you have a passion for God's primary purpose in his life, which is being transformed to the image of Jesus Christ, our elder brother, and being transformed, not in the presence

necessarily of a multitude of people who do not know us in our intimate moments, but being truly transformed. And have that transformation being witnessed by the people closest to us.

How humble am I? I mean, really, my wife could answer that better. How kind? Can you answer that? Do you know how kind I am? Do you know if I'm gentle? So it is living out these things with the people that know us best. And what are they? Blessed are the poor in spirit.

When was the last time it could be said of you that you were striving, even violently, you know how the kingdom is taken by violent men, that you are violently trying to lay hold of poverty of spirit? You violently lay hold of insurance, of a new job, of passions, of a new car, violently lay hold of. When was the last time you forcefully and violently sought in prayer, in the word, in fellowship to be made conformed to the image of Jesus Christ in your poverty of spirit? And yet this is a look at this. He's talking about the essential characteristics of Christianity.

This is not some fly by night teaching. This is not just some little word in passing. Here we have the greater than Moses.

He sits down and the writer puts it in such a way that is so majestic. He opens his mouth and begins to teach them, saying, I mean, you don't find that in many places in the Bible. He's setting up.

Get ready, folks. This is what all the prophets have ever promised. And he's getting ready to speak.

And what does he say? Something we would have never said. And this is he's not being cute. He's not being romantic.

He's not just trying to print something out there that sounds poetic. He is really serious. OK, number one, number one essential in Christianity.

Number one, poverty of spirit. When was the last time you thought in your heart this is the most important, essential characteristic in my Christianity? I need to be striving and praying. Towards this thing, do you see how quickly we can.

Air. Get distracted, you see how many truths that you can learn and you forget. You know what I've been amazed is I go to college retreats and things and teach and, you know, I've also been to Bible conferences and things and and I don't want to sound smart alecky or anything, but I rarely learn anything.

I mean, really tremendous. I've been to a lot of retreats among with great scholars and not because they're not great scholars or because they're not godly. Here's what I found out.

I was in Kansas a while back at one of the universities there and I was speaking and they had all these brand new Christians. I mean, brand spanking new been saved in the dormitories and were under discipleship and stuff and they would all get up and share. And I was like filling my notebook with what? Truths I'd never heard? No, truths that I had heard, learned, and stored away in my library.

As though, oh, I've caught that. I understand it. Let's put it up here on the shelf and now let's go on to greater things.

I don't find that I have much trouble learning things. I find that I have the greatest deal of trouble in retaining things. Poverty of spirit.

What does this mean? An acknowledgment of absolute dependence upon God. Absolute dependence upon God. I used to tell I sometimes teaching young preachers, I would say, you cannot preach without the power of God on your life.

Now I tell them, you can't tie your shoes without the power of God on your life. And all these, you know, come in. They always were all we just want to do something for God.

That's wonderful. OK, first exercise. Everybody breathe in.

They all breathe in. I said, breathe out. They all breathe out.

I said, now, from where did that breath come from, God? OK, you can't even breathe apart from the power of God. Now, good luck in going and doing something for him. It is seeking to live in absolute dependence upon him and praying towards that.

But if I had to point out a most dangerous prayer, it would be this one. Lord, teach me absolute dependence upon you because you know what he's going to do. He's going to knock out every prop that you're resting in.

And he's not going to do it for a month. He's going to do it for a lifetime. And then not only is he going to knock out every prop that's been holding you up, that's not him.

He is going to bring monsters and giants against you that would ground you to powder just with a look from their eyes. And he is going to cause you to survive. Only his power.

Poverty of spirit. It is a most amazing thing as you come more and more to understand poverty of spirit. It is so freeing.

I can do nothing. But that's also wonderful in that if I can do nothing, I have no reputation. If I have no reputation, I have no reputation to uphold.

I have nothing to prove. It's all gone. I'm just free.

If I do mess up and someone says something about it, what did you expect? Only God says I am what I am. Everyone else understanding properly says I am what I am by the grace of God. I think that I always hear about the life of Jesus.

You know, that God's working in us, the life of Jesus, and I preach on that. It's a truth. But how come I almost never hear about the death of Jesus being worked in us? Remember that it just took an instant to fill those disciples with immeasurable earthquaking, earth shattering, cosmic crushing power, the Holy Spirit.

They went years of being emptied and broken, Peter being dashed on the rocks, possibly harder than all of them put together. Lord, I won't deny you. I'll die for you.

I'm going to see to it, Peter, that that you deny me. I'm going to step back so far that you're going to deny me, but not so far as that you perish. And I'm going to show you what you really are.

And I am going to empty you. Not only am I going to empty you. I'm going to empty you so much it's going to seem as though I have turned you inside out.

Don't you imagine that would hurt? And then I am going to fill you. Then I am going to fill you. But it also brings this about.

If I have no power of my own, then I can trust. And rely on his power and I become something more than a man, I become a vessel of clay. But within that housing, so weak and muddled, behold the power, abiding in that believer is the power to stop a storm, according to the will of God.

Abiding in that believer is the same resurrection power manifested on Easter morning to be emptied of self and self-will and self-power is to be filled with the very power of God so that one who says, I can do nothing. I can't breathe apart from the power of God also realizes that, Lord, if it be thy will, the dead shall be raised. We are not competent in ourselves, but we are most certainly competent because he makes us.

I was I was asked to do it was kind of a great privilege. I was asked to preach at a place where I was really amazed that they would ask me, but they did. I was like a circus clown set free in a palace.

And I couldn't believe that they they asked me and and they called me up a couple of weeks prior. One of the secretaries and they said, you know, Mr. Washer, we want to make sure everything is in place and, you know, everybody in the church is praying and things are and we're just excited. And I said, you know, we're just we're just praying.

And I said, oh, dear sister, I said, don't worry. I said, pray, but don't fret. She said, why? I said, you have the most qualified man in the world coming to preach.

And I could just I could just feel her spirit just ground into dust. She just wilted. Who is this proud man? And I said, I am the most qualified.

And then I said, for consider your callings, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, nor many mighty, not many noble. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong and the base things of the world and the despised.

God has chosen the things that are not so that he may nullify the things that are so that no man may boast before God. He uses a man and a woman to the degree of how pitiful they are. It's Gideon all over again, don't you see? Trying to be so strong and unusable.

Was it Tozer who said, I found that if a man would just make himself make himself usable, God will wear him out. But the thing about it is it's looking and saying, this is what I am. Nothing.

But God has said that he would take those who were nothing and do things that would astound the strongest man. You're all familiar. Most of you are with our ministry, that the principles of the ministry.

It's based on George Mueller's orphanage work that we do not we do not advertise. We do not make our needs known. We do not raise funds.

We do not do all these all these things, even though they can be biblical and very proper to do. We do not make any of our needs known. If a millionaire walked up to me and said, you know, I'll give you up to six million dollars.

Just tell me what your needs are. I would say, no, we have none and walk away. We've done it.

And because of that, people always say, man, you must have so much faith. You must be such a great prayer warrior. You must be.

Haven't you read first Corinthians? No, I have the weakest faith. I am the most frightened. I can see God do a deliverance.

And in one day, we have not a dime to support all the hundred missionaries that we have. And then in two days, every need is supplied, even though no one knew there was a need. And I can see that great victory.

And then two days later, my friend Darren Rotman, who works with me, comes in the office says, Paul, we've run out of masking tape and pencils. And I crawl up in a fetal position and start doubting God. God doesn't do things because men are great.

God does things with the weakest men to prove that he alone is great. And we could just grasp that how free, you know, you look at men. Sometimes you go, man, God uses him this way.

He's a great man of God. Your attitude ought to be just the opposite. God's using him so much.

He must be pitiful because that's all God uses. And it's so wonderful. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

What is blessed me? I don't know. I just think if you took every good word and every great promise that's found in Scripture and you put it all in a bag and handed it to somebody, that's what it would mean. It goes so far beyond any word that well, it goes.

I don't need to say in English, it goes so far beyond any word in Greek or Hebrew. It goes beyond human language, goes beyond human comprehension. But who is blessed? The poor in spirit, those who with regard to their salvation, if you were to even hint, even hint that they had something to do with their salvation, they would become so nauseous as to vomit.

That if you were to even hint that there was something that they were doing that was unique in order to create a large ministry or a work of God, they would run out of the building screaming, not unto me, O God, not unto me, but to thee be the glory. Poor in spirit, is this a reality in your life? Not that you've arrived because none of us have. But is there a reality in your life that God is working death and weakness and all sorts of things into your life so that more and more you see your weakness, you see your weakness, you see your weakness and he becomes stronger and stronger.

Now, this applies to the Christian life. This applies to poverty of spirit. It also applies to to repentance.

And it brings in the doctrine of revelation at the same time. And if you can understand the way all these things work together, it can really make your soul happy. Now, in what way? You're walking along, you're an unbeliever.

What happens? We talked about it to a full extent this morning. If you're walking along and you're an unbeliever and Christ is revealed, God is revealed to you in a way that you've never seen him before. And through the work of regeneration, everything else, what happens? You respond to that revelation.

How? Poverty of spirit. Do you realize that's a big key in being saved? Repentance in a way is poverty of spirit. It's just collapsing.

That's why the old timers used to talk about repentance, even the Bible, repentance from good works. You just collapse. You realize that everything that you do is just striving, useless striving.

And so you have this revelation of God that you've never had before. And through the work of the Holy Spirit, what is created in you? A poverty of spirit and a repentance that just dashes all your hopes of self-salvation into the ground. But are you left to despair? No.

Why? Because in that revelation is also the revelation of the grace of God in the face of Christ. And it lifts you up. And even though you experience a poverty of spirit and a repentance like never before in your life, there is also a joy that you have never experienced in your life.

And then what happens? You go to bed and you get up the next day. You're walking along in your Christian life. And what's going to happen if you truly are a Christian? Another revelation.

Now, I'm not talking about necessarily visions or something. Just talk about God revealing more of himself to you. And what happens when he does that? You see more of God than you've ever seen before.

You're brought to a deeper poverty of spirit and a repentance than you've ever experienced before. But you're not left in despair, for your joy is increased to the same measure, because there again is the grace of God in the face of Christ to the end. I can't wait to get 90.

I'm not kidding. Can you imagine? Yeah. That in the end of your days, you are there broken and impoverished and yet so full of joy, unspeakable, so distrusting in yourself, so confident and happy in him.

You see, that's what we're talking about here. This is the Christian life. It is an experience.

It's not just experience. Right. Not just experience and not just truth either.

You are experiencing the living God and his work of sanctification in you. And it means more than just dotting the I's and crossing the T's, because Pharisees do that and then go to hell. It's more than just homeschooling and dressing right, because the one that God esteems is the one who's broken, contrite, trembles at his word.

There's a song when my boys couldn't sleep. When I was a new father and just wanting to be so gentle now and they can't sleep, I just put them in the barn. But there's a song I used to I sung to both my boys all the time trying to get them to sleep.

And it would be, oh, my son, I am weak and I'm trembling for the Lord. I am always remembering. Oh, what a strong shepherd holds you in his arms.

He will break you and make you his own. I don't put I don't like contemporary Christian music very much, but I don't throw the baby out with the bathwater either. And a few years ago, a guy wrote a song called I Have Been Crucified with Christ.

And a beautiful song, beautiful song. And and one day I went to preach and they said, well, there's going to be, you know, a guy is going to lead the music and a very special fellow and everything. And he was the man who wrote the song.

And he looked like a mosaic. He looked like God. Have you ever seen how someone makes a stained glass window? They take a bunch of different layers of different colored glass.

Then they get a hammer and they just beat the living daylight out of it. And they break all the glass into so many pieces. It's all mixed up.

And then they start pulling out those broken pieces, which forever you will be able to mark that they were broken. They start putting them together and form something so exquisite that when the light passes through it, it's a beauty to behold. That's the only way I can describe the person who wrote that song.

I have been crucified with Christ. He looked like a man that God had literally broken into a million pieces and then sewn back together. You know, it's amazing to me that I'll hear a sermon on radical depravity or I'll hear a sermon on the wrath of God and I'll walk out of there praising God.

Just glorying in his beauty. And yet the person that I'm seated beside is fiercely angry. Isn't it amazing how the same truth is beautiful to one person and ugly to another? Some of you were probably thinking, well, who would want to look like something that's been broken all the pieces and then patched back together? Me.

Because I didn't start out looking like Jesus. Neither did you. And if we're going to get there to any degree, some serious rearranging is going to have to be done.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Are you poor in spirit? Now, there's two things that I need to say here. One of them, there is an attitude of poverty of spirit.

It's an attitude in which you not only can answer on a theological exam. Yes, I believe that I should be poor in spirit. But God has so worked in your life and so given you grace that you really believe it.

That you really believe that apart from his grace, you would deny him. Apart from his grace, you would commit the most heinous sin. Apart from his grace, you would be a grotesque disfigured.

One of the prayers before I, a private prayer that's very special to me before I preach is, Lord, grant me your grace, else I'd be nothing more than a seething demonstration of vile flesh before your people. Do you? Has God so worked in your life over the years? Has he granted you grace to really believe that I am capable of it all apart from his grace? It's very hard to wickedly and critically judge when you see your capacity to still do evil. Poverty of spirit.

Now, another thing is that poverty of spirit works itself out in a prayer life. But I want to be careful here. What I'm going to say, it doesn't matter how I say it, it's going to be misunderstood.

And in both extremes are bad as extremes always are. But there's two ways that I want you to think about this. I have seen in men much older and much godlier than I'll probably ever be.

When we're young, there seems to be this just down on our knees manifestation of poverty of spirit, of maybe praying hours a day and seeking God and doing that. And that will continue throughout all our life, because if we don't have a prayer life, we're in trouble. But at the same time, you have to be very, very careful, because I have seen men that in their lives have prayed so much that their life just seems to become a walking prayer, where in their younger days there was this manifested more time of just isolation down on their knees.

And in their older days, although they did not neglect the practice of prayer, there was such an attitude of poverty of spirit that every breath was a prayer. I don't think you can let go of one in order to grab the

other. I want you to know something.

I heard an old saint, some would call a mystic, say that you can never practice the presence of God and practice the continual dependence upon him, unless first you have been trained in this school of prayer. My dear friends, you have not because you ask not. He says, open your mouth wide and I'll fill it.

We Baptists are amazing. You know, it's like, it's like, yeah, God will give you whatever it is his will. Of course, it's not his will to give you anything.

It's his will to show himself strong, to show himself kind, to show himself a wonderful, wonderful, giving, merciful Savior, God, leader, Lord, sovereign King. And in everything, there should be this acknowledgement of poverty of spirit. And in absolutely everything, because as believers, my friend, there is no such thing as secular in our lives.

It does not exist. The word secular or outside of the kingdom no longer exists. So we're drawing on the power of God to breathe.

We're drawing on the power of God to shake someone's hand. We see someone across the room that is approaching to us. We breathe a prayer to God asking that we be a source of grace, a source of blessing, an instrument of him.

We have a thing at work that is coming before us and we pray and we seek his power. We've got to deal with something at home. We're on our knees and we pray for his power.

We're walking up and someone just gives a glance to us. We pray for his power. We've got to go to a store and buy something.

And we know that it's nothing more than vanity fair in those places. So as we're getting out of the car, we're crying out to God, protect my view, protect my eyes, protect my heart. You've got to preach.

You're praying. You've got to pray. You pray to pray.

Brother Leiter told me one time, he goes, I think he's quoting someone else, but he says, you pray until you can pray and then you pray until you have prayed. This is constantly calling out to you. This is constantly calling out to you.

But he is so strong. You will do such magnificence at your head. He loves to just set your head whirling at what he will do.

Are you bold enough? Are you bold enough? Violent enough to ask him? And you need to think about this. And you need to think about this. Before you do, ask him, ask him to make you poor in spirit.

You say, well, sure I am. Listen, I caution you. I can remember one time before my hips were open.

I can remember one time before my hips were open. Chronic pain, arthritis, and chronic pain. And I was serving as a missionary in Pruitt.

And I walked out on this balcony. And I was crying. Tears were running down my face.

I couldn't take it anymore. If any of you have ever suffered chronic pain, the pain is not really the problem. It's the nausea.

And the headache not being nauseous. And I am just wanting to throw up. And I can't throw up.

And my head is reeling. And I walk out on this thing. And I had forgotten my God because I despaired.

And I said, God, I despair. I am a missionary. I can't walk.

I hurt so bad. Why are you doing this to me? I felt so impressed on my heart. Almost like, well, it's what you asked me for.

I don't understand why you said that. It's what you asked me for. I asked you for this.

And all of a sudden, I remember all those times in college. All the young guys around me that were so fired up for the Lord. And all of us constantly down on our knees.

Lord, I can't do this. Lord, at any cost, break my heart. At any cost, make me like Jesus.

At any cost, make me poor in spirit. I don't care if you kill me. I don't care what... Those prayers are extremely dangerous, even when prayed by young fools.

He'll take you up on them. And He will break you and make you His own. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Theirs is the kingdom. Isn't it amazing that if He had sent every one of us to hell, He would have been just and kind and loving. Nothing would have changed in Him.

And everyone who even marched off into hell would have acknowledged God is all these things. He's loving, He's kind, He's just, He's holy. But He saved us from hell.

Now, that would have been unspeakable if He had only saved us from hell. Maybe put us in a little room with just white walls. It would have been better than hell.

But He didn't just save us from hell. We're going to heaven. Now, if He would have just brought us to heaven and let us stand there, just kind of like, I don't know, if they have ponies or something, you hold the reins for them, like a lawn jockey, tie them out in the yard, if He just had us standing there.

It would have been unspeakable. We could not measure the grace of God revealed in that. If He had made us like angels and called us to serve Him and worship Him, it would have gone far beyond any angelic poet's ability in heaven to write.

But He didn't just make us angels. He made us sons and daughters, co-heirs with His Son. Someone said, you know, God loves people more than anything.

No, He doesn't. He loves His Son more than everything. And He's made us co-heirs with His Son.

I was preaching, it's been several years now, over in Romania with Brother Leiter. And I'll never forget this. Brother Leiter, for about an hour and a half, he was preaching to the gypsies.

And I'd never seen him spend himself so much. He spent himself doing everything, and humanly speaking, hopefully in the power of God, and I believe it was, to communicate them the beauty of Christ. Communicate to them the beauty of Christ.

And heaven would be Christ. And just on and on and on about Christ. And I'll never forget when he got finished, a guy raised his hand and said, well, what else do we get? And I just saw him kind of crush.

Do you not realize there is a thing that we call the condescension of God? You say, oh yes, God condescended when His Son, you know, and His humiliation took on flesh. No, let me put this past you. That God is so glorious and so beautiful that He has to condescend to take His eyes off of Himself to look at any other thing, no matter how beautiful it is.

And this is what the poor in spirit will inherit. Inherit a constant, ever-growing view of the beauty and glories of God. Now, why do I say ever-growing? Someone says, where do you get that? Well, just mathematics really.

This problem that the finite has with the infinite. A kid asked me one time, he goes, we know everything when we get to heaven. I said, well, you'll know a lot, but you won't know everything because you'll still be finite.

Well, what will we be doing? Chasing down the infinite. And that's why heaven never gets boring. And I'll finish with this view of the kingdom that he's talking about.

Now, I'm going to speak in human terms, a little vulgar, a little bit too common. I'm not very Puritan speaking anyways. Let's say you get to heaven, okay? Walk through the gates or whatever you're going to do.

Maybe you just pop up. I don't know. But you walk into heaven and you see God as you have never seen Him before.

You have to be supernaturally strengthened so that the beauty of it wouldn't make you mad. You see a vision of the beauty and the glory and the joys of God. It throws you into an ecstasy that literally only a supernaturally strengthened creature could even bear.

And you fall down in a joyful worship that you never even imagined possible. And let's say you go to bed. You don't go to bed, but we've got to do something to say there's a break.

You go to bed and then you get up in the morning. What do you do? In that dawn, you see a vision of God that so eclipses the vision you saw the day before that it's as though you've never seen Him before. And it throws you down in such ecstasy and joy.

You worship Him as though you even the day before never even dreamed possible. And you go to bed. And then what do you do? You get up the next morning and with that dawn comes a new vision of God that so exceeds the last two visions that it is as though you had never even seen Him before.

And you spend eternity mapping out the glories of God. And every day is new. Why? Because infinite is that way.

To those who are poor in spirit, you inherit everything. Everything. Let's pray.

Father, I come before You. Lord, I long to submit to this teaching. And submit to this teaching in a true way so that it is evident among even those closest to me.

Lord, I pray that believers would be strengthened to violently seek such a thing by force, with passion. Lord, I pray that if there are those who falsely profess to be believers and yet have no evidence of this in their life, Lord, You would use it to call their sins to remembrance and that they would repent and be saved. Lord, help us.

Help us, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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