

# 07 Pressing on to Greater Humility

by Zac Poonen

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*The ultimate destination of every Christian is to become like Jesus Christ, and we must make progress in our Christian lives every day by seeking to become more like Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our lives.*

**Duration:** 1:02:24

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:29

**Topics:** "Christian Humility", "Sanctification"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking to have the mind of Christ, not just as a study but as a deep longing. It challenges the common belief that the ultimate destination for Christians is heaven, revealing that God's true destination for believers is to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. The speaker urges listeners to focus on becoming more like Jesus every day, rather than just aiming for heaven, highlighting the need for humility and continuous repentance to progress in the Christian journey.

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## Transcript

So, we've been looking these days on what it means to have the mind of Christ. And we must not look at this as just a bible study. It must be something that we have a great longing to have.

Let me repeat what I've said many times about our ultimate destination in Romans 8.29. See, many of you who have come from different places, when you got into a bus or a train, you had a destination. Even when you came here, if you came by train, you had a ticket with the name of the place you're going to go to. And you get into the right bus or train that is going to take you there.

If you get into the wrong train, even if you have that ticket, you will not reach there. So, you look around and see, which is the train going in my destination? And you get into that train. Now, God has also appointed a destination for us who are Christians at the end of our life.

And every Christian you ask will tell you that that destination is heaven. Every book that you read will tell you that destination is heaven. Every preacher will tell you that that destination is heaven.

But I never say that. Because the Bible says that our destination is something else. Do you know that? Do you know that God's destination for you is not heaven? If you think God's destination is heaven, you will live a very careless life on earth.

It says in Romans 8.29 that we are predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. That is, there is a destination God has determined beforehand. And that destination is that we might become like Jesus Christ his son.

In that way, he will be the eldest brother among many brothers. So, what is God's will for us? That we might become like the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you see that as your destination, something happens in your life.

You seek to move towards that destination. Every day you want to become more and more like Jesus Christ. But if you say your destination is heaven, heaven is somewhere up where God dwells.

Can I go closer and closer to there every day? Can I go higher and higher in the sky every day? No. When I start my Christian life, I am on the earth. When I end my Christian life, I am on the earth.

So, if that is my destination, I have made no progress at all in my life. Every train moves closer and closer to its destination every hour. I have asked myself, why is it so many Christians are not passionate to become like Jesus Christ? And I think this is the answer.

They think their destination is heaven. And then so, once they are accepted to the Lord, then they think their only job in life is to get other people onto this train to go to heaven. And then so many of these people become backsliders.

And the preachers also become backsliders because they haven't seen their destination. How can you become a backslider if you are getting closer and closer to becoming like Jesus Christ? You know, I am so amazed when I hear about the way many preachers are falling nowadays around the world into serious sins which even the many atheists don't fall into. What is the reason? They have never made progress to becoming like Christ.

They are only becoming more and more active in the ministry. They start with a very small ministry and they grow and ministry becomes bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and a huge area of ministry. And you know, if you read their reports and all, it's a fantastic work they are doing.

But during those same period of time, 10, 20, 30, 40 years, their own spiritual life has become smaller and smaller and smaller. Do you know that most Christians are more humble on the day they are converted than 20 years later? Almost all the preachers I have met in my life, they were more humble on the day they were converted than 30 years later. What about you? What about you if you are an elder brother? You be honest with yourself.

Were you more humble when you were converted 20, 30 years ago than you are today? Then you are in the wrong train. You are going in the opposite direction. If you are going in the right direction, you should be much more humble today than you were 30 years ago.

You should be more humble than you were last year. If you got into a train to come to Tuticorin, every hour you come closer and closer to Tuticorin. If your destination is to become like Jesus Christ and you got onto that train 30 years ago, you should be so much more humble like Jesus Christ.

And if you were more humble, you would get so much grace because God gives grace to the humble. But it is not true. I have seen with brothers in our own churches in the last 30 and more years, even some elders, I remember what they were when they started.

Very humble God fearing brothers. It was so good to fellowship with them and listen to them speak. But today, they have become proud.

There is no anointing when they speak and it is so difficult to fellowship with them. It is difficult for me. It is much more difficult for other brothers.

So which direction are these brothers going? And some of these are elder brothers in our churches. They are going in the wrong direction. And they are trying to lead a church.

My brothers and sisters, you know it is a very dangerous thing when God blesses us. The more God blesses you, the more you must fall on your face before God. I often think of these branches in a tree that bear fruit.

The more fruit there is, the more the branch will bend down. If there is no fruit, the branch will stand up like that. What is fruit? The fruit is not my ministry.

The fruit is how much humility has come in my life. You read the fruit of the spirit. It has nothing to do with our ministry.

So it depends on our destination. So I want all of you to have a clear understanding as to what God has written on your ticket. What is your destination? There is this word in English called predestination, which means, it is written in this verse, that God has determined the destination beforehand.

And that destination, the place I am to reach, that is to become like Jesus Christ. So for myself it is very clear. Every year I should become more and more like Him.

And who can evaluate that? Nobody else but you. Only I know what my inner life is like. None of my co-workers know it.

My wife doesn't know it. Only I know what I am thinking about throughout the day. Only I know whether I am proud about something.

Only I know whether my thoughts are pure all the time. Only I know whether I love my brothers and sisters. I can act in a very loving way.

That means nothing. I can impress people with my love and my humility and all that. But we are talking about the mind of Christ.

That is an inward thing. The reason why Jesus lived in a certain way was because he had certain thoughts in his mind. How could Jesus put his arms around a leper? It is because he thought in a certain way about lepers.

He said, nobody touches them. Nobody cares for them. And he had compassion on them.

Why was Jesus so merciful when the Pharisees wanted to kill the woman caught in adultery? Because he thought in his mind, this poor woman, she sinned. But it may have been a mistake. And God is very compassionate to people who make mistakes.

But men are very hard towards people who make mistakes. It is all in the mind. If you don't allow Jesus Christ to change your mind by the Holy Spirit, at the end of this year, you will be in the same place you are

right now.

I want to say, I do not want to be where I am now by December this year. I want to be more holy. I want to be more humble.

I want to receive more grace. I want a greater anointing on my life and ministry. I want a greater fire in my heart.

My outward body will naturally become weaker by the end of this year. But the Bible says, as we grow older, we cannot expect to have the same health and strength. But that does not matter.

The inward person must become more pure. We are so concerned about our outward testimony. We are so concerned about our health.

We are so concerned about our appearance. That is good, but you must be more concerned about your spiritual state. And it is in the mind that the change takes place inwardly.

That is why we have been thinking about that, the renewal of our mind. And so we must be careful that we don't allow thoughts to come into our mind that lead us in the wrong direction. If you are traveling in a train to Tuticorin, you will never get off that train and say, okay, let me go in that direction for half an hour.

No, you will never get off that train. So if your goal is to become like Christ, every day you are seeking to become like Christ. And you never get off that train.

You don't say, okay, let me go and watch that cinema for a little while just to get off this train. And then you see so many filthy things in that cinema, that gets into your mind. And it is dragging your mind away from you in some other direction.

It is not making you more Christ-like. So there are many things like that. There is nothing wrong in reading a newspaper or a book or anything.

Even some television programs are okay. But you have to ask yourself one question. Is this book, is this TV program leading me away from where I want to go? Then I don't want it.

It may not be helping me to go in that direction, but it should not lead me astray. For example, when you study mathematics and science in your school, it doesn't help you to become more like Christ. So I am not saying you should not study that.

No, that is necessary for your earthly job. I am talking about things that lead you in the other direction. If you are going towards Tuticorin, you should not get into a train that is going in the other direction.

Even for two minutes. So if your aim is, if your goal is to become like Christ, you must not read a book or see a picture that will make you more impure in your mind. You may say that is only five minutes.

But those five minutes you are going in the wrong direction. Ah, you say it is only five minutes. Yes, it is only five minutes.

But God sees something in your heart in those five minutes. God sees that you are not really serious about going in this direction. Then God is not going to support you as much as He would have done if you had kept on going in this direction.

We saw on the first day from Hebrews chapter 5, where the writer says to these Christians, verse 12, by this time you should have become teachers. But you are not only not teachers, you still need somebody to teach you. You are still learning the kindergarten lessons.

So I hope by the end of this year, many of us will be able to share God's word more powerfully than we are able to do right now. You may not become a preacher and a pulpit, but you can even share God's word in a little way to other people. That is God's will.

What does it say? The time has come when you should have become teachers. So read this as the word the Holy Spirit is saying. God is saying this.

The time has come when you should be able to teach others. Just like you teach your little children the things you have learnt in your life. I am not just talking about mathematics and science, but you teach your children to brush their teeth, how to change their clothes, how to take a bath, how to take care of themselves, how to go to the toilet, how to eat with their hands, so many things we teach our children.

But if you are a mother who does not know anything, how to teach your children how to eat or how to take a bath or anything, you don't have to be a mother, you just have to be 7 or 8 years old to teach your younger brother or sister those things. And why is it that so many people in our churches are not able to help others? Because we are not passionate to become like Jesus Christ. So I want all of us, dear brothers and sisters, even you young people, I want you to see clearly the destination written on your ticket by God.

To become like Jesus Christ, 100%, in the way you think, the way you speak to people, the way you behave, the way you handle money, the way you men look at other women, exactly like Jesus Christ would look. You won't reach there in one day. You did not reach, you took it in one minute after you got into the train.

It took time. Many of you had to travel overnight and finally you came. Everything takes time.

The Christian life is a journey, but we should be getting closer and closer. Please take this warning seriously. And especially if you find, think about this.

There are many people who would not have committed certain sins after they were born again within that first year. But now they are doing it. When they were first converted, they would not have signed a false statement.

Now they are doing it. When they were first converted, they stopped seeing all the cinemas. Now they are seeing it.

Which direction is that train going? The other direction. So I am just warning you, get off that train. Get into a train that is going in the right direction.

We don't have time to waste. We have to reach our destination. If you kept going up and down in the trains on your way here, you would never have reached here.

Why is it some Christians make so much progress in one year and some other Christians don't make so much progress even in 20 years? Because those Christians who have made progress, they stick on that train and they say, I am going to be like Christ. I am going to allow the Holy Spirit to change my whole way

of thinking that I begin to think like Jesus Christ. I am asking you to make that your prayer.

Lord, I want my mind to be completely changed. I will tell you honestly, that is my prayer. And I haven't reached there yet.

I have not reached my destination. See what Paul said in Philippians 3. He uses an expression. Let's read verse 12.

The last part he says, I want to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of me. Listen to this. What Christ laid hold of me for, I want to lay hold of that.

What is that? It was to become like Jesus Christ. Totally. And he says in the same verse, but I have not yet attained it.

See, he had already been a Christian for 35 years. I have been faithfully seeking to be like Jesus for 35 years. I have not reached it yet.

But he had already progressed so much. And one proof of that is this. If you want to compare Paul with today's preachers, particularly these preachers who speak on many platforms or sometimes even on television, they will say like this.

When I was in such a place some years ago, I prayed for a man, his eyes were opened. Another lame man in some other place 3 years ago, he got up. Another place some years ago, one man was dead.

I prayed, he raised up from the dead. Always these things happen in some other place. It doesn't happen where they are.

It's all a deception. Paul wrote about 13-14 letters. Did you ever find him saying that? When I was in Lystra, I raised a man who was lame.

And then I was in Troyes once, I remember I raised a man from the dead who fell out from the window. No, he doesn't say it. Paul was even caught up to the third heaven once.

But he doesn't tell us what all happened there. He says, God has not permitted me to say anything of what I saw. He doesn't tell us about what all he experienced.

He doesn't tell us about all the visions he had. Most of the time he only talks about his conversion in his testimony. But he had so many experiences with God, he doesn't talk about it.

That is the big difference between the apostles and today's preachers. Or you take Peter. Peter doesn't say, I remember once I was in one place, there was a woman called Dorcas who was dead and I raised her from the dead.

Where does he say? He has written two letters, he doesn't even mention it. So, we find that these people were not interested in boasting about their ministry. That's my point.

Because ministry was not the big thing for them. Their aim was to become like Jesus Christ and they said, I have not reached there yet. So, that is what Christ laid hold of Paul for.

But he says, there is one thing I do. There is only one thing I do, verse 13. I forget the things that are behind and I press forward to the things that are before.

Now, many people when they quote that verse, they are thinking of all their sins. I have committed so many sins, I would like to forget all that and move on. And they are always talking about their sins.

Last year I committed so many sins, I want to forget all that. Last week also I committed so many sins, I want to forget all that. Yesterday also I committed so many sins, I want to forget all that.

That's not what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, I have made so much progress in my Christian life, but I want to forget that. I don't want to look back and say, I have run 100 miles already.

No, he says, I am not looking back to see how much like Christ I have already become. And he is not looking around to see where all the other Christians are behind him. That's not what he is talking about.

He says, I don't want to think how much I have progressed in my Christian life. I don't want to meditate on how much God has done in me or through me. I am only going to look ahead and see how much more I have to go.

So that's a good word for this year. You take it seriously, it will really go well. You decide now, Lord, I am not going to look back and see how much I have already progressed, how spiritual I have become.

Such thoughts will come into your mind and they come from the devil. See how much you have progressed and see how much better you are than other Christians. Then you become puffed up.

Paul says, I am forgetting all that. I am looking ahead. In other words, he is saying, I am seeing how much unlike Christ I still am.

Not looking back and seeing how much like Christ I have already become, but looking ahead and seeing how much unlike Christ I still am. That is the way of progress. One thing I do, I am not going to see how much like Christ I have become.

I am not going to see how much better I am than other believers around me. I am going to see how much unlike Christ I still am. The only way to do that is to keep looking at Jesus.

Oh Lord, I see so much in you that I repent. I believe that Paul's life was a life of daily repentance. Because I have discovered that more and more in my life.

More and more in my life, I find as I look at Jesus, I can only repent. And when you are repenting yourself all the time, you have no time to find fault with other people. You have no desire to throw stones at any woman caught in adultery.

You have no time because you are repenting so much yourself about so many areas. Who are the people who can sit at home and gossip and gossip and speak evil about so many others? Who are the brothers and sisters who are always giving their opinion about this person, that person, the other person, every other person? Who are these brothers and sisters in our churches? These are the brothers and sisters who are not repenting themselves. Why are they not repenting? Because they are not looking at Jesus.

If they looked at Jesus once, they would find ten things to repent in their life. But they are not looking at Jesus. They are looking at what's wrong with this person, what's wrong with that person, what's wrong with the other person.

And the devil is ready to point out so many people to you. And when you finish looking at one person's faults, the devil will tell you about another person's faults. And then he will show you another person.

And you will spend all your life just doing that. Okay, you have done all that in the past years. Today is the day to repent.

And say, Lord, I don't want to turn my eyes away on all these people. Yeah, I have enough problems myself. I have so many areas in my life, I am not Christ like.

I want to be like you. I want to press on towards my destination. And I do not want to look back and see how much I have progressed.

Or how much the Lord has done. That's why we need to study the life of Jesus. You know, that is one of the main reasons why the Holy Spirit has been given.

If you ask me, Brother Zach, what is the greatest ministry that you have experienced after being filled with the Holy Spirit? I will tell you. He has shown me more and more of Jesus' earthly life. How he lived on this earth.

Mostly how he lived in Nazareth. And then in his ministry, how he dealt with people. The Holy Spirit is showing me that all the time.

How he spoke to people. And because I am a preacher, the Holy Spirit shows me how Jesus preached. I study it.

Because then only I can be like him. Then only I can talk to people like he talked. Then only I can preach like he preached.

You can also be like that. If you say, Holy Spirit of God, fill me and show me Jesus. How he lived, how he walked on this earth.

And the second thing, the Holy Spirit changes me into that likeness. That is the most important ministry that the Holy Spirit does in me. And then there are also some small things like speaking in tongues and all that.

Those are all small things. The most important thing is that he makes us like Jesus. He has to show me Jesus first.

So I want to encourage you this year, as you read the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what Jesus was like. Here is a promise. John 16 and verse 13.

First of all he says, in verse 12, I have got many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. That is like telling a kindergarten student, there are many things you have to learn about physics and science and mathematics, but you cannot understand it now. Because you are only four years old.

But you have to learn all that. So Jesus told the disciples, there are many things I want to tell you. I can't tell you because you won't understand it.

Supposing you get into a kindergarten class and teach some science and mathematics, those poor children cannot understand. Only after some time they can understand. Sometimes we say, Oh God,

teach me everything.

That is like a four year old student telling the teacher, teach me everything you teach in the whole school. No, no, no. You have to go little by little.

Line by line, like it says in Isaiah. But the Holy Spirit when he comes, he will show you little by little all the truth, verse 13. He will guide you into all the truth little by little, according to which class you are in.

But don't stay in the same class for more than one year. Do you want any of your children to stay in the same class for more than one year? No, one year is alright. Next year they must go to the next class.

So the Holy Spirit will guide you into all the truth. And what will he do? Verse 14, Jesus says the Holy Spirit will glorify me. Because he will take of the things that are mine and show it to you.

That is the verse I was talking about. The Holy Spirit will take of the things of Jesus and show it to you. And he has shown me so many things about Jesus in the last thirty years.

Things I have never read in a book or heard in a tape anywhere. The Holy Spirit can show you also. For example, I have thought like this.

Supposing I was living in Nazareth, say in the time of Jesus. He has not yet become thirty years old, maybe he is twenty five years old and he is just a carpenter in a shop. He looks just like any other carpenter.

And he is a poor man living in a small house. And he has got this small carpenter shop next to his house. And he is working there.

He is just like any other man in Nazareth. He does not look special. There is no halo in his head like you see in these photographs.

He is just an ordinary man. Supposing somebody tells me, you know there is a carpenter there called Jesus. He is a good man.

Why don't you go and meet him? So one day I go to meet him and I spend half an hour talking to Jesus. He is a twenty five year old young man. He is not doing any miracles, he is not preaching.

After I come away from him, what is the impression I will have in my mind? What do you think? After you have read the Gospels, you have read the four Gospels, all of you have read it. You know you got a little picture of Jesus. Supposing you had physically met Jesus in the carpentry shop when he was working there.

And you spend half an hour with him. And you come back. And somebody asks you, brother, sister, you met this man, this carpenter.

What is your impression? What do you think of him? What impression would he have made on you? I will tell you what I would have said. I would have said, boy, what a humble man he is. Not what a holy man he is.

He made me frightened with his holiness. I would think, what a humble man. What a humble, loving man.

Why do I need to know that? Because then only the Holy Spirit can make me like that. If you think Jesus frightened everybody with his holiness, everybody who came to his carpenter shop, he preached to them for half an hour, then you will also become like that. You will drive people away from the Lord by your so-called holiness.

Let me tell you brothers and sisters, if somebody spends half an hour with you, some stranger comes and spends half an hour with you, what impression will he have when he goes away? Will he say, what a humble brother, what a humble sister. If they can't say that, you are not on the right train. You are not going in the right direction.

You are in the wrong train. Please get off it quickly and get on to the right train. So many years you are sitting in the wrong train.

Get on to the right train. Don't say, but God is using me here and using me there. God doesn't care for that.

Martha was making so much food in the kitchen and Jesus said, I am not interested in that. Martha was making so much food in the kitchen and Jesus said, I am not interested in that. You are worried about your ministry.

God says, I am not interested in that. You are worried about this, that and the other for the Lord. That's not what the Lord is looking for.

What is he looking for? You know in that story where Mary was sitting listening to Jesus and Martha was working in the kitchen. That's in Luke 10 verse 38 to 42. Jesus was interested in fellowship.

See Mary and I have fellowship. What is the use of doing so much ministry for me when you don't have fellowship with me? Please remember that. I fear that many of us are happy that we are doing something for the Lord.

Your goal is more ministry in 2010. God is my witness. I am not interested in more ministry in 2010.

I am interested in becoming more like Jesus in 2010. There is only one thing Paul said I do and that's the only thing I want to do. And if ministry comes, it will be the overflow of my fellowship with Jesus.

This is the only way we will preserve ourselves until the end. We must have humility in our mind. This is a very important requirement.

Jesus was a humble person because he always had humble thoughts in his mind. It's not in the way we speak that we show our humility. When Jesus said you are a generation of vipers to the Philistines, when he took a whip and chased away all those sheep and dogs, you would think that he is not a very humble person.

It's not in these things. Humility is in the mind. And there is one very easy way to know whether you are becoming more humble in your life.

Now if I were to ask you, dear brothers and sisters, have you become more humble in your life during 2009? You will say, well I think I have. See, let me show you a verse in Zephaniah chapter 2. This is an amazing verse. I don't know whether you have read it.

The book of Zephaniah chapter 2 and verse 3. Please remember this verse all your life. It's a very good verse. Zephaniah chapter 2 verse 3. I hope you know where that is.

It's towards the end of the Old Testament. The 4th book from the end. 2-3.

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth. All of you who keep his commandments. Who is he talking to? All those who are humble.

Let me read it like this. All of you who are humble in the church today. I want you to seek for something.

Verse 3. Seek for more humility. The humble of the earth have to seek for more humility. So to the humble people in the church I say, you are already humble.

Praise the Lord. Now seek for more humility. Seek to be more like Jesus in this year.

How many of you have read that verse before? I am sure you have read it. But you don't notice it. Because we don't meditate on these verses.

If you are humble and seek more humility, you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. What is God angry against? He is only angry against sin. That's all.

If I play the fool with sin, I am in danger of facing the Lord's anger. He is not angry at disease. He is angry with the devil and he is angry with sin.

So I want to hate sin. As I said, there is one way to find out whether we are really growing in humility. One fool proof way.

1 Peter 5 and verse 5. The last part. God gives grace to the humble. God is opposed to the proud.

See if a strong man is pushing me back, I can't go forward. But if a stronger person than him is pushing me forward, then I will go forward. Now the devil is always trying to push us back into sin.

And he is too strong for us. That's why we fall into anger. That's why we fall into the lust of the eyes.

That's why we fall into so many sins. Because the devil is much stronger than us. When you fall into anger, what are you testifying? The devil is stronger than me.

When you lust with your eyes, what are you saying? The devil is stronger than me. But you are also saying another thing. When the devil pushed me back, God did not push me forward.

That is why I fell into anger. That is why I lusted with my eyes. That is why I told a lie there.

Because when the devil pushed me back, God did not push me forward. You say, why didn't God help you? Because God helps the humble. He gives grace only to the humble.

Then I discovered, I am not so humble as I thought. I thought I am one of the humble brothers in the church. But I lost my temper there.

I lusted with my eyes here. Lord, thank you for showing me. I am not so humble as I thought.

All the brothers and sisters think that I am a very humble brother. But I am defeated by sin in my thoughts. When the devil pushes me back, I go back.

You don't give me grace. Why? Because God gives grace to the humble. If you get grace, then the promise is clear.

Romans 6.14, if you are under grace, sin cannot defeat you. Romans 6.14, if you get grace, no sin can defeat you. Not anger, not lust, nothing.

Because God's grace is more powerful than the biggest sins in the world. But you did not get grace. That's why you sinned.

That's why you fought at home. You didn't get grace. What shall you do? Don't just pray for grace.

Humble yourself. God will automatically give you grace. Then he will push you forward.

I want God to push me forward the whole of this year. If God pushes me forward for the next 350 days, can you imagine where I will reach by December 31st? If God keeps on pushing me for the next 350 days, where will I be at the end of this year? And God will push me if I remain humble. Humility is in the mind.

Lord, I want to look at Jesus. Then I will automatically be humble. That's great.

Heavenly Father, we don't want to just know all the theories. We want the reality in our life. Help us, every one of us.

Help the elder brothers to lead the churches in the right direction. And help every one of us to have low thoughts about ourselves. To look at you, Lord Jesus.

And to see your glory. To put our face in the dust. And to follow you.

So that you can support us with your grace every day of this year. Pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you for watching.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/dTNDvEmgTZc.mp4>

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