

Amazed at the Mercy of God

by Zac Poonen

A true Christian life is marked by gratitude for God's mercy and a deep understanding of the gospel message, which begins with recognizing God's anger against sin.

Duration: 1:09:52

Scripture: Genesis 6:5

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Christian Gratitude"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being grateful for God's mercy and wonders why God never gave up on us despite our failures. It highlights the need to honor God, be thankful, and avoid looking down on others while striving for holiness. The speaker urges listeners to remember God's compassion and to cultivate a spirit of gratitude, leading to a transformed life of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Transcript

One mark of a Christian who's growing is that he's more and more grateful for what God has done for him, and he wonders more and more how good God is. I was thinking of that when we sang that one line of that song, I don't know whether you remember it. I wonder why he did not give up on me.

Did that strike home to you? I wonder why he didn't give up on me. Can you think back of a time in your life or long periods in your life when you didn't care much about God, and there was every reason for God to give up on you. And if you are here today, it's because he didn't give up on you.

The thing is, we tend to forget those periods when it begins to go well with us again and again for some length of time. We forget those periods when he should have given up on us. When we come to Christ thinking that we deserve so much from him.

See, the world is full of people who feel they deserve. There are people who even complain that God's not good to them. It's all, they feel that God is not giving me what I deserve.

Even Christians. I've been so faithful. Why hasn't God healed me? Why hasn't God given me a good job or allowed me to find a good partner? So many things.

The world is full of people who murmur and grumble and complain. I think of earth as a dark planet, full of grumbling, complaining, murmuring all the time. And in the midst of it, there are a few spots of light.

Those will never grumble or murmur and complain. Why don't they murmur and grumble and complain? Because they are convinced that the only rightful thing they deserve was hell. I've been a believer for 58 years.

But I wonder sometimes why periods of my life, why God never gave up on me. And that makes me very grateful. It brings tears to my eyes.

Tears of gratitude. And I never feel even today that I deserve anything other than hell. And that's what's made my life supremely happy, supremely grateful.

That's why I can never, never complain. Never, never complain about the way somebody treats me because that's nothing compared to hell. Never complain about some aches or pains or some prayer of mine that was not granted or all the silly things that even Christians complain about.

And I want to say to you that if you're still got in that habit of grumbling, complaining, or feeling that other people should treat you better or respect you more, all the rubbish and garbage that the devil floods our minds with, making us think that we're so important and we deserve respect and all the rubbish, all the rubbish between husbands and wives, each thinking that I deserve more respect for my partner. I can say to every single one of them, you don't believe that you deserve hellfire. Your Christianity did not start on the right foot.

See, many of us have not heard a proper gospel at the beginning. I think that is a problem that sometimes, you know, we read in India, I don't know, you probably don't read much of that here in the United States, but in India, every now and then you read in the newspaper of some building that collapsed. It started building up to the third floor or fourth floor, then it collapsed.

There was nothing wrong with the third or fourth floor. The problem was with the foundation. And then so many people died.

I've read that so many times in the newspapers because, you know, contractors are corrupt. They don't use proper cement or proper material and they don't care for people's lives. And the punishments are not so severe in India as they would be in the U.S. I mean, that doesn't happen here because people would be jailed for years and then they don't, they're scared to do such things.

But there's not such severe punishments there. And so this happens all the time. But that's a picture of why some Christians have been Christians for 10, 15 years.

It's like they've gone up to the fourth or fifth floor of the building, then it collapses. By collapses it means, I'm not saying they stop going to church. I say they're still grumbling and complaining.

That's a house that's collapsed. I don't know whether you realize that if you're not grumbling and complaining in your life, your house has collapsed. You must still go to church and everybody must think you're a wonderful Christian and you sing well and perhaps preach well as well.

But all grumbling and complaining is a fault in the foundation. That means when we first got converted, it was not a proper conversion. It's like these premature babies, you know.

Premature babies are babies that come out when they are, I don't know what is the minimum period by which a baby can survive. But even if it comes out when it's six months in the womb, it's not really ready to

live. And then they have to be kept in incubators for a long time, be given tubes in their nose and things like that to somehow keep them, because they were supposed to be in the womb for nine months.

They came out early. And that's a picture of evangelists who try to bring people to what they call new birth, to accept Christ before they are ready to be converted. You know that a lot of Christians were so-called converted before they were ready to be converted.

And so their conversion is shallow. The foundation is bad because they were converted being told, some people are today converted by being told Jesus will heal you, will make you wealthy, will solve all your problems. Well, which human being in the world doesn't want to get money, health and all his problems solved? Is there anybody like that in the world? Nobody.

And if that is the message that Jesus came with, the whole world should accept it. Even when he came to earth, they wouldn't have killed him. They would have made him a king because he's come to heal everybody, to make everybody wealthy and to solve all their problems.

What more does anybody in the world, what more did anybody in Israel want? Why did they kill him? Because that was not the message he came with. The message he came with was, you guys are rebelling against God. Turn from your rebellion.

That's repentance. Turn around, submit to God, make God first in your life. So you got to love God more than your father, mother, brother, sister, wife, and children, more than yourself and more than all your possessions.

That's not the message preached today. But that was a message of discipleship that Jesus preached, and that's why they killed him. You stop preaching that message and you'll be popular.

Because the world is full of people who think, I deserve this, I deserve that. They want to go to a church that tells them the same thing. You deserve this.

God will give it to you. Of course you deserve it. Go and claim it.

But a proper foundation means we got to recognize what the Bible says, that the anger of God is there against all unrighteousness and sin. So let me just show you some passage in Romans chapter one. See, if your foundation of your Christian life did not begin with this teaching, then there's something shallow in the foundation.

And maybe after the 10th floor, it'll collapse. I don't want your building to collapse. That's why in our church, we preach strongly on true repentance.

And true repentance has to begin with this understanding in Romans 1, 18, that the wrath, we don't use the word wrath nowadays. It's a word much stronger than anger. It's a fierce anger.

How many people in the world have thought that God is angry with you? It's not a good message, right? Oh no, God loves you. But what about this? The anger, the fierce anger of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. Do you think there's no ungodliness in the world today? It's full of ungodliness.

Unrighteousness. You think there's no unrighteousness? There's corruption, financial corruption, sexual corruption from top to bottom, and against those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. You can suppress the truth in your conscience.

Your conscience tells you something is wrong and you suppress it and go ahead and go against your conscience. The world is full of people. They know something is wrong and they still promote.

I mean, there's such a corruption in the world. Where do they hear that the anger of God is there against all this? Have you heard it? Have you ever heard a message on the anger of God, which is revealed against corruption and sin and unrighteousness and people who suppress the truth? There are verses like this that are not popular. The most popular verse in the Bible is not Romans 1, 18.

It'll never be popular. A popular verse in the Bible is John 3, 16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. That's a good verse, but that verse must come on top of repentance, of a turning from that which God's anger is revealed against. And you don't have to look around in the world.

You got to just look into your own heart and see the corruption that there's there. There's nothing good in the human heart. I tell you that there's a lot that appears to be good, but the motive underneath is always selfish and that's what corrupts it.

You can have a glass full of the best milk in the world or the best drink you like, whatever it is, some sweet drink, and you just need a few drops of poison and it's corrupt. You know that when it comes to a drink, but it's like that. We can have so much of what we call external goodness.

There are so many people who give for orphanages and help. I'm talking about non-Christians who help orphanages and help the poor, but underneath it all is they're seeking something for themselves. There are a lot of people who give hoping that God will bless them because they care for the poor.

That's poison underneath. It's a corrupt motive. It's not because they love those poor people.

It's because they want to get something from God as a reward for their helping some orphan or it could be even worse than that. They want some honor from people for their goodness. There's so much of seeking honor for the good that we do, that we want people to notice and observe what we have done.

That's a poison. It's a corruption. We don't realize it.

A person with a sensitive conscience who knows God knows that this is corrupt and a person with a sensitive taste bud will immediately detect there's poison in this liquid. I better not drink it. It's because man doesn't see the corruption that is in his heart that he doesn't realize that all the evil that he criticizes are in the world around him.

People are like this and people are like it's all in his own heart. Everything. I personally believe that the heart of every human being is exactly the same and the way we were brought up by our parents may have restrained us from going ahead and doing some of those evil things.

I mean, if I think of the worst terrorist or suicide bomber in the world who goes and blows up others and I look at his heart, I have said to God, Lord, I believe my heart is just as corrupt as that person's. I don't know whether you ever realized that and I don't mean just saying it to God just because you heard me say it now, but if you're convinced about it, it's not you saying to God something you're not convinced about. Don't tell him a lie.

If you're not convinced about it, don't say it. I'm absolutely convinced about it. That's why I say, Lord, I believe my heart is as corrupt as the heart of the worst terrorist or suicide bomber or murderer or sexual exploiter of women.

My heart is just as corrupt as theirs. And because I've understood that and acknowledged it, I want to say God's delivered. And if you have not been delivered from this corruption that is in the flesh, consider it is because you don't feel it is there.

You feel you're a little better. That's exactly how the devil wants you to feel all the time. You're a little better than that person.

You're not as bad as that person. And that's why you're so defeated. Some of you are wondering why after so many years of listening to this message and coming to the church, why am I still not delivered? I'll tell you why.

Get the foundation right. Get the foundation right that the anger of God is against all sin. And it's not just out there in the world.

It's right inside because we all descend from Adam. There's a common phrase now, DNA. Adam's DNA is there in that terrorist and it's in me, in my heart.

It's just as corrupt. He didn't descend from some other human being. He descended from the same sinful head of the human race that I descended from.

Now, I've discovered through the years that, you know, because I myself have wondered why is it that people have heard me for so many years and heard the most wonderful truths from Scripture don't seem to come into this life of victory. And yet there are some who have come into that life. Why is it some others sit in the same church and never seem to come into that life? They have to all the time pretend that they are spiritual.

Are you sitting here pretending that you're spiritual? Dear brother, sister, please get rid of that acting. God hates acting. I'm not saying you get up and confess your sins, but go before God and say, Lord, why do I have to pretend to be spiritual? Why can't I be really spiritual? Go before God and seek him.

You know, God is a rewarder, not of everybody, not of those who pray to him casually once in a while, but those who pray to him earnestly. And when I find people whom I've met who've come and heard me many times and say, ah, brother, I'm still seeking God. I wonder if in their entire lifetime they'll find God because they're seeking him so casually.

You know, it's like I use the illustration that if you're walking in the grass sometime at night and you drop a 10 cent coin in the grass somewhere, well, you may look around, see if you pick it up, but how long are you going to search for it? Only if you would search for one hour in the grass to find that 10 cent coin. No, I don't think you'd stop even five minutes. But if you misplaced a bundle of \$100,000 that you were carrying from somewhere to some other place and you went from place to place and you don't know where you misplaced it, boy, you'd search for that in some other way than you would.

You'd take leave from your work, forget about your meals. I want to find that. I want to tell you that a lot of people who search for God, like a 10 cent coin they drop somewhere, they pray, oh Lord, I'd really like you to, I want to know you.

I'd like you to fill me in the Holy Spirit. Nothing happened. I prayed three or four times, nothing happened.

Well, I've got other things to do. I've got more important things to do than just be praying for that. You think you'll ever find God? You will not find God in a hundred years.

I'll tell you that right now. Whichever church you go to, whichever preacher you listen to, God will not meet with you because he will not be treated like a 10 cent coin. He's the ruler of this universe.

But if you can search for God, like that man who's lost a hundred thousand dollars is searching for him, that God is worth even more than that. I tell you, you will find him. It's a law.

And when you find him, you will wonder why he didn't destroy you in the years when there was so much evil in your life. The anger of God, as it says here, is revealed against ungodliness, unrighteousness. We did all of that.

I wonder why he didn't give up on me. I'll tell you honestly before God, I have that wonder in my life even today. That verse struck me like anything when we sang it.

I wonder why he didn't give up on me. And if it didn't strike you, I want to encourage you when you go home to spend a little time alone with the Lord. And if it's not convenient during the day, before you go to bed or while you're in bed, spend a little time alone with God and say, Lord, show me how you could have given up on me, but you never gave up on me.

And help me never to forget that. Remind me of that regularly till it is deeply imprinted on me that I was saved from the wrath of God. I was saved from an eternal hell, which is what I deserved.

And Lord, remind me every day that what I deserve is hell, but you never gave it to make me grateful. And I deserve this hell. So when we preach the gospel, it is not, hey, Jesus loved you, man.

He died for your sins. Why don't you accept him? I've heard preaching like this. Jesus says, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

And by the way, that verse in Revelation 3.20 was not spoken to unbelievers. That was spoken to a backslidden church in Revelation 3.20. You read it to the backslidden church in Laodicea. But people who don't read the Bible probably quote it to unbelievers.

In my foolish days, I've done it also. But Jesus standing at the door and knocking, why don't you open to him? He's getting wet in the rain. Why don't you open to him? And you feel sorry for this poor Jesus who's getting wet in the rain.

Okay, Lord, come in. And you feel you've helped him to come into your heart. And of course, now he should be eternally grateful to you, right? For having opened the door and letting him in.

This is the way the gospel is preached. It is a false gospel. And if that is the type of gospel you heard, I want to tell you, your building will collapse.

You may build for some time, it will collapse. Because that's not the gospel. The gospel is the wrath of God.

You know, Romans is the book that explains the gospel more than any of that verse that you just read, sin shall not rule over you. It is in Romans chapter six. That is like grade six.

Before you get there, you've got to get to the kindergarten. And that's here in Romans one. And the kindergarten lesson is not sin shall not rule over you.

That's grade six. The kindergarten lesson is in Romans one. And the message of the gospel begins in Romans one verse 18.

That's the first lesson. All the previous verses just an introduction. He's saying how salvation comes by faith.

And he says, now let me explain it to you. Let me start with ABC. Let me start with rock bottom.

The first message is the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness. And why is that? Because nobody can complain that he doesn't know about God, because in the creation of the world in Romans one verse 19 and 20, you just got to look up at the skies and see there must be a God who created this universe. In the creation of the world, his invisible attributes and his eternal power and divine nature, verse 20, have been clearly seen, being understood by what you see made.

And so that there is no excuse. All the atheists, you know that an atheist needs to have more faith than me. I'll tell you why.

You need to have more faith to believe that there is no God than to believe that there is a God. Now I'll use an illustration. If I took this watch and broke it up into 10,000 pieces and kept on shaking it for 100,000 years, do you think it'll come out as a watch? You need a lot of faith to believe that, right? But if on the other hand I tell you there was an intelligent person who took these pieces together and then a machine or something put it all together and made a watch, that you don't need much faith to believe.

Okay, now let's look at the universe. There are people who say that something happened and there was a big bang. And I don't know what that means, but something shook and all these things happen.

And suddenly all these stars and planets and all started rotating in perfect order, but we're keeping our watch by the way these planets move. That's more perfect in time. We got to adjust our watch sometimes a few seconds slow, but this is never slow.

For millions of years, it's been going perfectly. They never collide with each other. And you say it happened accidentally.

You need more faith for that. It's easier for me to believe there's an intelligent person who planned all this. Or you look at the human body.

To me, it's a wonder that millions of people don't die every day, that half the world should be dying, more than half the world should be dying every day. Because so many things can go wrong with this body. I sometimes wonder how even a child lives for one year without getting sick and dying.

Because there's so many things that can go wrong in a human body. If you studied the human body, you know that. There are miles and miles of blood vessels in this body.

And just got to snap one of them and you're dead. How is it doesn't happen? You've got to have more faith to believe that these things are all accidental. There is a God.

That's what it says here. There's no one who can say that there is no God. He's denying what he can see.

And if there is a God, then definitely who created me, I am responsible to him because he's made me a moral being, the proof of which is my conscience. And even a little child has a conscience. You can kill that conscience by denying it, denying it.

That's what happens to most of us. We kill the voice of conscience. But see, for example, even a two-year-old child, his conscience will tell him if he tells a lie.

If his mother asks him, a two or three-year-old child, did you do this? And the child did it and says, no, mommy, I didn't do it. You can see all over his face, I'm telling a lie. But you wait until that child is 18 years old and it'll tell you in such a convincing way, I never did that.

I don't know, what are you talking about? He's become such a perfect liar. What happened between the age of three and 18? He kept on killing his conscience in various things. Maybe he'd steal a few little things in school, somebody's pencil or eraser or something.

And his parents wouldn't tell him anything about what he stole or he'd tell little lies at home and parents would ignore it or fight with people and parents would ignore it. The result is that child grows up and conscience is killed, killed, killed, killed, till it grows up to a person that can do so many things wrong. You know, I believe that Judas Iscariot went astray.

He was stealing money from, imagine stealing money from Jesus offerings. If he was stealing money from the high priest offerings or something, okay. But Jesus offerings, can you imagine taking money from that and not having a bad conscience about it? How could that be? There's a verse in the Bible that explains it.

Proverbs 22 five, train up a child in the way he should go. And when he's old, you know what it says? He will not depart from it. That's not a verse that tells us about doing good.

It talks about doing bad. It doesn't say if you train up a child to do good, train up a child, whatever way you want him to go. When he's old, he will not depart from it.

You train up your child from childhood to ignore little lies. He'll grow up to be a liar. You train up a little child when he's small to ignore little, little tests.

That's how Judas Iscariot became a thief. I'm absolutely convinced about it because I believe the word of God, which says you train up a child in the way he should go. And that's, that's why when he's old, he could even steal money from Jesus bag.

It's a terrific warning to Christian parents. Peter, Simon Peter was about the same age as him. How could he get so convicted that he wept so bitterly just because he denied Jesus? I mean, think of that.

And I, oh, I was so ashamed to say I knew him because I was scared of getting caught and being beaten up. And that made him so remorseful that he wept and wept and wept. It says he wept bitterly for a rugged fisherman to weep bitterly.

It's really got something else to have. Again, what's the answer? Proverbs 22, 5. Train up a child in the way he should go. When he's old, he's not depart from it.

Train up your child to be sensitive to small things, to repent and ask God to forgive them for a small little thing. When he grows up, he'd grow up to be sensitive. So the difference between a lot of human beings between the terrorist and this very nice child growing up is because the way the parents have brought them up.

But essentially the heart is evil because my parents brought me up in a God-fearing way. I was restrained from a lot of sins, but it doesn't make me better than other people. I have to recognize that even against me, the wrath of God is revealed against the corruption in my heart, which other people can't see.

I may not have committed so many external sins like that other adulterer or thief or murderer has done, but my heart is just as corrupt. And the wrath of God is revealed against that, against sin in the heart. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

And it's that evil in the heart that God is angry against. The Psalms, it says, God is angry with the wicked every day. And the anger and the wrath of God is not something that is spoken about much.

It's not a very pleasant subject for preachers to talk about. They won't be popular. Do you know who was the preacher? Let me tell you the name of the preacher who preached most about hell.

Jesus Christ. Nobody preached like him about hell. You know why? Because he came from heaven and he knew the reality of hell more than anybody else.

And he told people that they were bound there if they did not repent. Let me show you one verse that he said. And you understand it.

Turn with me to Matthew's gospel chapter 23. And you got to see to whom he's saying it. These are the people called the Pharisees who were people who studied the Bible.

They were not God-fearing, but they studied the Bible a lot. And they knew the Bible more than anybody else in the nation. They never missed their meetings were on Saturday.

They never missed a Sabbath Saturday meeting. They prayed three times every day. Three times a day, they would stop and pray.

Twice a week, they would fast and pray. They would calculate 10% of their, you know, they were not businessmen, they were farmers and shepherds. So 10% of their flocks, 10% of their grain, 10% of their profits, they would give to the temple, obeying God.

They did all that. And their doctrines are all correct because Jesus said to his disciples in verse 23, verse 2 and 3, the Pharisees have seated themselves on the chair of Moses, whatever they tell you to do, do. Now, Jesus would never say whatever those non-Christian religions tell you to do, do.

No, he will not even say what other Roman Catholics tell you to do, do, because he won't teach us to pray to Mary or say the rosary and things like that. He'll never say whatever they tell you to do, do. He'll never tell you whatever the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons tell you to do, do.

He won't say that. But when it came to the Pharisees, he said, whatever they tell you to do, do, that means their doctrines are right. That's a certificate from Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees' doctrines are right. The second thing he said about the Pharisees was, in verse 25, what do you scribes and Pharisees? You clean the outside of the cup, but the inside is all full of robbery and self-indulgence. Now, there's one good thing mentioned in that sentence and one bad thing.

The good thing is your external life is clean. Your internal life, your heart is corrupt. Okay.

The heart is corrupt. Let's leave that aside for the time being. Is it a good thing when your external life is clean? Sure.

It's not all that's required. God looks at the heart. But I mean, if you never murder, what do you mean by external life is clean? You don't murder.

You keep the 10 commandments. You don't commit adultery. You don't steal.

You don't tell lies in court. You keep the religious laws. You don't worship idols.

Your external life is clean. Here we're a group of people whose doctrines are all right and whose external lives are clean. Now look at your own life.

You belong to a church. It's got all the right doctrines. Praise God.

Your external life is so good that nobody here can find fault with your external life. You qualify to be a Pharisee. And Jesus said to them, verse 33, you serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? Can you believe this is the same Jesus who is the meek and mild Jesus? You know, many people have got a one-sided picture of Jesus.

It's not the full picture. It's like, you know, if you have a face of Jesus in a jigsaw puzzle with many, many pieces, and you put maybe one fourth of those pieces together and say, that's Jesus. Hey, that doesn't look like Jesus at all.

You just got the ear and the nose or something and three quarters of the face is missing. That is the type of Jesus being presented by many preachers today. Part of it is right.

Some of those pieces are part of the jigsaw puzzle, part of the face of Jesus, but it's not the whole thing. And if it's not the whole thing, it could be somebody else. It could be some terrorist's face.

How do you know? So when you read the Bible, you see the picture that this Jesus who said, come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest, also said to some people, you serpents. And he felt that serpents is not strong enough. So you brood of vipers.

Vipers are the most deadly of all snakes. They sting. They're so small that you don't even notice them and they sting and you almost certain death.

And he calls them a brood of vipers. It's your message. You sting people and send them to hell with your message.

How will you escape the judgment of hell? So we need to hear that from Jesus Christ. Why didn't he send me to hell in those days when I was rebelling against him, when I couldn't care less for him, when I was a

first class hypocrite? And hypocrisy, by the way, is the worst sin of all. When you pretend to be holy and you're not, you're just religious.

That's worse because I never see Jesus condemning murderers and thieves and adulterous women in the Gospels. No, he forgave them. He didn't condone what they did.

It was wrong. But you know, they never thought they were holy. That adulterous woman who came to Jesus, she never thought I'm a holy woman.

The murderer on the cross, he didn't think he's a holy man. The one advantage that murderers and adulterers have is that they don't think they're holy. The people who think they're holy are the ones who go to church every Sunday, but whose heart can be just as corrupt as those guys' heart.

But they've got this whitewash over their heart and they get a reputation with others that they're good people and they like that reputation. And they come along and live on that reputation. And just the Pharisees were like that.

They were not like the thief on the cross. Romans wouldn't crucify the Pharisees because their external life was good. They didn't commit adultery or murder.

But Jesus looked at them and said, you brood of vipers. He never said that to the thief on the cross. He never said that to the woman caught in adultery.

You're a viper. We need to understand that. Some of us who may think that we are better than all those terrorists and all those other people.

I thank God. You know the story of Jesus said of a man who prayed in the temple, Lord, I thank God I'm not like other men. I'm not like these terrible sinners.

We may not say that, but when we think like that, it's because we feel I don't really deserve help. And I want to say to you very honestly, my brothers and sisters, if you've never heard it in your life from any evangelist, whatever type of conversion you said you had when you were so-called born again, I got to tell you right now that every single human being deserves hellfire. And if you recognize that you're no better than any other human being, then you're going to lay a good foundation that the wrath of God was revealed against you.

And I wonder why he didn't give up on me. I wonder why he didn't send me to hell years ago when I deserved it. Then I'll be grateful even for small mercies.

I'll be thankful for the fact that he's allowed me to just live on this earth. I won't be questioning why did God allow me to have this sickness or that sickness? There are people in the world who got 10 times worse sicknesses than you. I'd say, Lord, I've got nothing to complain about.

Everything you do is too good to me. I would certainly pray when I'm sick that God will heal me. But if he doesn't, I will not question why he doesn't heal me as if I deserve to be healed because I pray.

I'll tell you what I deserve, hell. And a little sickness, even cancer is better than hell. Once I realized that, you know what will happen? All complaining, grumbling, murmuring will disappear from my life.

Otherwise, you can hear a hundred sermons. You'll be free from murmuring and grumbling, complaining. You'll never be free.

I preached against murmuring and grumbling for years and I found people are not free. And I discovered these guys need to get a good foundation. They need to see that they deserve hell right at the beginning and deserve hell right now.

And they must wonder, why didn't God give up on me years ago? Has it ever brought tears to your eyes when you think that God didn't give up on you? That you're still alive today? That you can come to a church like this and hear some of the most wonderful truths being preached anywhere in the world. Are you sort of grateful to God for that? Are you grateful that God has brought you to a place? And there are hundreds of churches. Why in the world did he bring you to this one? Where you could hear more of the truth of scripture than almost any other place in the Bay Area.

He didn't give up on you. He certainly had a plan for you. Okay, I want to get back to Romans chapter one.

I really want to lay a good foundation in all of your lives so that, you know, building will never shake all eternity. The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and it goes on to say about the creation of the world how there's enough proof in the world that there's there is a God who created all this. It requires, as I said, more faith to be an atheist.

It requires less faith to believe in a God who created all this. Now listen to this. Here is the guilt of man.

And what is the first thing they mention? I'll tell you a lot of other things mentioned in this chapter. I want to read that first. First of all, they made God, verse 23, in the image of man and birds and animals.

Haven't you seen so many religions make images of God in the shape of a bird or sometimes even a snake or different, different animals? They exchanged. They thought, you mean this animal created all this universe? You've got to be off your head to believe such a crazy thing. To make an idol.

And it says they became foolish. They thought they were very clever, verse 22, because they knew so much of science, but they became fools because even though they were so intelligent in things of science and mathematics and all that, they changed the glory of God and made it in images in the shape of four-footed animals and crawling snakes. So what did God do when he saw that? Idolatry.

He gave them up three times. It says in this passage, God gave them up, God gave them up. And when God gives up somebody, think of that verse.

I wonder why he didn't give up on three times. It says here, God gave them up. First is verse 24.

God gave them up to the lusts of their own heart in impurity that their bodies might be dishonored. They began to indulge in sexual sin. They were unfaithful to their wives and they'd commit adultery and go to prosecute.

You know, it's the result of God giving up. I'll tell you this. Any man who's been unfaithful to his wife, he's got to read this verse.

God gave him up at that time. Maybe he repented and came back, but God gave him up to the lusts of his own heart in impurity that his body is dishonored with others. And he exchanged the truth of God for a lie and he worshiped, as I said, the creature instead of the creator, these idols.

And then second time, God gave them up. Verse 26. This is the next stage.

He's given up one stage and he go to a lower stage. And the next lower stage is women exchange the natural function for that which is unnatural. You understand that very well in today's world.

There's a natural sexual function that God has created for man and woman, which he created. You know, the very first thing that he said to Adam and Eve, be fruitful and multiply. What he was telling Adam and Eve was your husband and wife enjoy sex with each other and have children.

That was God who said that because sex was a holy function that God created for the propagation of the human race. And he told Adam and Eve to have that function. That's why he's created so much pleasure in it so that it's an indication of God's goodness.

But you leave that with your wife and go to somebody else. It's an indication God's given up. And then you're not satisfied with that.

God gives you up further. Then you go into women with women. And then it says in the same way, verse 27, men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards other men, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons, AIDS and other sicknesses, the penalty for their error.

No, it's a punishment from God. I'm just reading scripture, but I tell you there are places in the world where you can be punished for reading scripture today. Imagine what the world has come to.

You read the word of God. The world doesn't want that. They'll punish you for it.

And so all these indicates that they did not want to acknowledge God in their lives. They want to run their own life. They want to make money.

They want to live a comfortable life and give a token acceptance to God, say hello and salute him and carry on with your own business the rest of the day. What did God do? He again gave them up three times. That's the third time we're saying God gave them up to a depraved mind.

Depraved mind doesn't mean you don't get 100% in math. You may get 100% in mathematics, science, and you may be top of the class and you get a Nobel Prize and you can have a depraved mind as far as God is concerned because you don't understand purity. Purity is more important than cleverness.

It's a depraved mind that thinks cleverness is more important than purity. It's a depraved mind and if you think like that and you congratulate yourself because you're so clever or so gifted, maybe a gifted athlete or a gifted musician or something like that and you think that's a great thing, it's not. In God's mind, the only thing that matters is purity and love, how much you can be good to others and how humble you are.

Humility is basically only acknowledging that everything I have is given by God. That's humility. I have nothing of my own.

I didn't produce anything myself. God gave it to me. God gave it to me.

It's impossible for a man who lives in the presence of God to be proud. You become proud when you leave the presence of God. And so God gave them up to a depraved mind and so they went into unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, verse 29, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice.

They became slanderers, haters of God and oh, there's a whole list there. I don't even want to go further. Now what I wanted to show is this.

This is a big downward spiral that goes all the way down and I want to show you the first step downwards. Please remember this. The first step downwards is here in verse 21.

See, all the other verses are at the bottom of the spiral, but verse 21 is the first step. When they knew God, they did not honor Him as God and give thanks. They were not grateful that God didn't give up on them.

They were not grateful that God allowed them to live for so long in sin and rebellion. God didn't give up on them. That is the proof of His love.

Yeah, I see the proof of His love on Calvary's cross where He died to take away all my sins, but I also see proof of His love in me that for so many years when I did not honor Him as God, I know in my life the years when I did not honor Him as God, even after I was converted, I did not have a spirit of gratitude. Lord, I owe my life to you. I owe my breath to you.

What shall I live this day for? I shall live it for you. I shall not live it for myself. You give me breath, and with that breath I can speak words with my tongue.

What shall I use my tongue for? To hurt others? To get upset and angry with others and shout at them? That's not what God gives me breath for. What has God given me hands for? To do evil? To dishonor Him? What's God given me a body for? To honor Him as God. They did not honor Him as God, and they did not give thanks.

That's the first two steps downwards. You don't honor Him as God in your life, and you don't give thanks. You've already started going down, even if you don't reach all the way down to the things mentioned in the other verses.

So be careful, my dear brothers and sisters, that you don't take those first steps downwards all your life. Honor Him as God, which means you refuse to take honor to yourself. People will appreciate you, praise you, thank you naturally.

When somebody has done something for them, they will naturally come to you and say, thank you so much for doing that for me. I mean, I keep hearing it all the time. People are grateful for how they've been blessed through my ministry, something like that.

Oh, well, I accept it, but I never take that credit to myself. The moment I do that, I start to spiral down. I don't have to show that to you, but I stand before God, and I know that He knows my heart, that I refuse to take any of that credit to myself, because I know it does not mean... I know it very clearly.

You may think it's because I studied the Bible and I was faithful. No, it's 100% God. It's not 99% God and 1% me.

It's not. So I've learned to honor Him as God, because I'll tell you, I do not ever in my life want to take that one step down. In everything, I want to honor Him as God, and one proof of it will be that I give thanks.

In other words, I have a grateful spirit all the time. How can you ever complain for anything? If your wife accidentally put more salt in the food, or something was not so tasty, or something was not done on time,

and I'm upset, it means I'm not thankful. You know, sometimes when I leave my home town in Bangalore and go for some ministry somewhere, and there's some work to be done in the church, and I tell some of the brothers in the church, please, can you do this in the next three days? There's some important work to be done.

I hope it can be finished by the time I come back. A reasonable amount of time for that work. Then I always tell them as the last sentence, if you can't finish it, don't worry.

I will not be disturbed when I come back. Because remember, the only thing serious is sin. So don't worry.

So then they can relax and do that work. They don't feel that Brother Zach will be upset if the work was not done by the time I come back. He will not be upset.

Don't sin. That's all I say. You didn't finish your work? Okay.

The world's not going to collapse because something was not done on time. No. If you learn to honor God and you're grateful for all that God has done for you, and how he never gave up on you, I tell you, I can never give up on others.

I'll tell you myself, I have met a lot of backsliders. I never give up on them. I remember a young man who was coming to a church in Bangalore.

He was not converted, but he'd come regularly. And then he'd go out with his friends sometimes and get drunk or get into some bad habits. He'd come and tell me, Brother Zach, he had a lot of respect for me because he knew I loved him.

He said, Brother Zach, I slipped up again. I'm sorry. He'd come home and tell me that.

I said, fine, don't give up. These things are destroying you. Give up those friends.

Come to the church. Hear God's word. I would keep on encouraging him.

After many, many months, he still was not converted. I think more than a year or two. Then one day he was working.

He got a transfer to another town. And I never knew when I would see him again. He came to see me that last day and he still was not converted.

And I told him, I say, I don't know how long. I say, you're the age of one of my sons. And I say, I don't know how long you'll go on this path of sin and rebellion against God.

But one day you'll hit rock bottom where you can't go any further. And in that day, remember one thing, that God still loves you. And remember that I still love you.

And come back to God. He'll accept you. And you can come back to me, to my home.

I'll accept you. So don't ever forget that. And I was so delighted when I saw him here a few years later and he was born again.

He was happy. I can never reject someone who's backslidden no matter how much, because I wonder why he never gave up on me. That's why.

I can be merciful to people who are so equal or who've known the Lord so much and they're backslidden. I used to criticize a lot. I mean, I still criticize false teaching.

I still criticize people who exploit others. I read once that Jesus was angry. I'm sure he was angry when he whipped the money changers out of the temple, but the word anger is not mentioned there.

I'm sure he was angry. But there's one place in Jesus' life where it says he was angry. It's good to know that.

And listen to this. It's in Mark chapter three. As far as I know, it's the only time in the Bible where it says Jesus was angry.

And that teaches me what righteous anger is from unrighteous anger. He was never angry when people slapped him, called him the devil, spat on his face. Whatever they did to me, he was never angry, teaching me that whatever people do to me, whatever name they call me, I have no right to be angry.

But Mark 3, 5, it says, he saw a man on the Sabbath day whose, verse one, whose hand was withered and he wanted to heal him. And the Pharisees were looking around to him to see, verse two, whether Jesus would heal him so that they can accuse him. They couldn't care less, this man with a withered hand.

And Jesus looked at them, verse five, with anger. What was he angry about? You guys are so hard hearted. Your hand is okay.

You're worried whether it's the Sabbath day or not. Look at this man with a withered hand. So many years, he can't use his hand.

He can't do his work. He can't earn his living properly. You guys are not bothered about that.

He was angry and he healed him. And it says the Pharisees were so angry, they wanted to destroy him, not just kill him, verse six. He was not bothered.

And I say, Lord, that's the type of anger I must have. When I see people around withered by sin, and they sit in churches where they are never told how to be free from that sin. They live, lusting, fighting at home, grumbling, complaining, claiming to be born again, claiming to speak in tongues, but with so much sin in their home life, bitter, unforgiving.

And nobody's ever told them that if you don't forgive others, God won't forgive you. You'll go to hell. And I see them, hell bound, because they were told, hey, once in a life, you accept the Christ, you're okay.

It doesn't matter how you live. All these false teachings. And when I see, when that chap, one of them comes to our church to hear the gospel, they say, hey, don't go there.

Those are heretics. You know what I feel? Anger. Not anger, because they call me heretics.

They can call me the devil. Many people have done that. I'm not bothered by that.

But they won't let that man whose life is withered be delivered. They live in their comfort. They themselves are going to hell, but they want to drag him too.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, you don't enter the kingdom yourself. And you close the door to the kingdom to other people. He was angry with such people.

And what the Lord has shown me is if you're not angry with such people, you're not like me. What does it mean to be like Jesus? It means to be gentle, to be serving others, to wash people's feet. I'm ready to do all that.

But it also means to be angry with people who will not let other people be delivered from a sinful life. I want to be thankful for what God has done in my life. And I always want to be thankful.

So I never want to look down on someone who has failed. But I want to warn them. If you continue like that, you can one day cross the line.

You know, I feel that God has put a red line in front of all sinners. And they sin, and they sin, and they sin, and they sin, and they're moving towards that red line without even realizing it. God's merciful, merciful, merciful, merciful, merciful, merciful.

One day, they cross the red line. There's no more hope for them. Let me turn you to Genesis chapter 6. In Genesis chapter 6, we read, a time when the whole world was wicked, the time of Noah.

There were two things in those days. Men were crazy with sexual sin. You read that in Genesis 6 verse 2. And the earth was filled with violence.

It says in verse 11, two things, a lot of violence and fighting and killing and sexual sin. It almost reminds us of these days, right? And Jesus said that the last days will be like the days of Noah, sexual sin and violence. But in the middle of that, the Lord said, it's not going to go on forever.

Verse 3, my spirit will not strive with man forever. I'm going to limit the number of days that I'm going to strive with man. And he gave them 120 years.

Now, 120 years is a long period of time. But remember, those days people are living up to 950 years and all that. So it wasn't a very long period of time.

It was about one-eighth of their life. So nowadays, if people are living up to 80, it's like saying, I will give them 10 more years and that's it. And the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great, verse 5, on the face of the earth.

But verse 5, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. And I want to say, when you read that, my brothers and sisters, I wonder if something rises up in your heart and say, Lord, in the midst of a world, which is full of sexual evil and fighting and quarreling, I hope you will find favor. I'll find favor with you by my attitude and my heart.

I'm no better than any of these people, but I want to honor you and I want to give you thanks. I want to thank you for being merciful to me. I never want to criticize others who fail because I fail much more and I'm capable of failing much more.

Dear brothers and sisters, I want to say that one of the dangers we face in church that's preaching holiness is to look down on others, to be absolutely holy like Jesus, yet not to despise others. That is godliness. If you are holy and you despise someone who's not like you, you're not holy.

If you're quick to find fault with people who don't agree with you in every little thing, you're not really holy. I have many convictions based on scripture, but when I see other Christians who don't follow those rules and everything, I have certain standards of righteousness. When I see some other Christians not following

those standards of righteousness in money matters, for example, okay, I don't want to despise them.

God's given me a sensitive conscience. I don't want to despise them. I say I hope God is merciful to them.

Or you can see particularly nowadays there's a lot of immodesty in the world among women and a lot of people who call themselves Christians in many churches, you may find that they don't have any standards. I don't despise them. I disagree with them, sure, but I always say maybe they don't have light.

I know they don't have light. Why do I have light? Not because I'm better than them. No, no, no, because he didn't give up on me.

Every time you attempted to despise someone, my brother, sister, remember that line of that song, I wonder why he never gave up on me. Every time you want to despise someone who's not measured up to your standard of holiness and you want to look down on that person, say that line to yourself, I wonder why he didn't give up on me. You're wondering why God hasn't given up on him.

First of all, wonder why he didn't give up on you. Yeah, and then you'll be thankful. If you keep that in mind all the time, you will always have a spirit of thankfulness.

Then you will be able to obey those commands which you have found so difficult. Rejoice in the Lord always. In everything, give thanks.

And I'll tell you one of the wonderful things that'll happen when you live like this. It'll take time. Like a person who's been crippled for a long time and is being treated and had surgery and all that, it'll take a long time for him to learn to walk properly.

The doctor will say, don't be impatient. Don't get discouraged. Give it one year and you'll walk like a normal human being.

So in the same way, I say all those have been spent many years grumbling, complaining, criticizing, finding fault and all that. Now it'll take some time. You won't recover overnight, but a time will come when you rejoice in the Lord always.

Yes, I tell you it'll happen. A time will come when you learn to give thanks in everything. A time will come in your life when you'll never have a bad mood.

You will never be in a bad mood 24 hours a day. Can you imagine what your home will be like if both husband and wife come to this life? It'll be heaven on earth. That's exactly what the devil doesn't want.

But that's exactly what God wants. And the whole purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit is to bring us to this life. So seek God earnestly and say, Lord, I want to honor you.

I always want to be thankful that you saved me from the wrath of God. I turned around from sin, which God hated. You know, I feel that many Christians haven't seen how much God hates sin, that his anger is against it.

Think of a father at home, mother. They won't be upset if you break a plate or something. That's not a serious thing, but that could be something that makes your parents angry.

Parents are angry at a child who does something so serious. It's something like if you went and stabbed your neighborhood child with a knife and you're just six years old. That'll make your parents really angry.

They should be. But if you break a plate at home, it's not so serious. Do you see the anger of God against sin like that? That I've done so many wrong things and God's angry with me that my sin is not like breaking a plate.

No. It's like going and stabbing somebody. The anger of God revealed against sin.

But he saved me. He didn't let me go to hell. He saved me from it.

And he saved you from it. Always be thankful. That's the first step downwards.

They did not honor God and they were not thankful. So if I can avoid those first steps, I will be delivered from all the other sins mentioned in Romans chapter one. God bless you all and I pray it'll be true in your life.

Let's bow our heads for a moment before God in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we know from past experience how easy it is to forget everything we have heard in just a few days. We know how active the devil is to make us forget the things that are most important.

And to keep our memory alive to the things that are unimportant. Help us to be sensible. To take your words seriously, Father.

That our lives will be changed. Help us to stop pointing the finger at others and see our own need a little more. Help us, Lord, to be kinder to others, strict with ourselves.

To see our need as you see it. And to never lose the wonder, never lose the wonder of why you never gave up on us. Thank you.

In Jesus name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/cox3UxkYu04.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/amazed-at-the-mercy-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net