

Be Thankful For The Way God Made You

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of not comparing oneself with others, focusing on accepting God's sovereign design for each individual. It highlights the dangers of envy and the need to come to the conclusion that God is good, regardless of circumstances. The message encourages listeners to be content with God's plan, avoid discouragement and self-condemnation, and appreciate the unique role each person plays in the body of Christ.

Scripture: Psalms 73:1, Psalms 139:13, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 2 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Kings 20:1

Topics: "Contentment in God's Plan", "Embracing Individual Uniqueness"

Description

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Transcript

At the beginning, we heard Bobby speak from Psalm 73. If you turn there for a moment. The first verse, Surely God is good.

We sing that often. God is good all the time. To those who are pure in heart.

So that is the conclusion he came to. He's writing that at the beginning. He says after all these experiences I went through, I finally came to the conclusion God is good.

If I'm pure in heart. And then he tells us how he was not pure in heart. What does it mean to be not pure in heart? Very often we think of sexual sin or stealing or something like that.

But here it's not that. My feet came close to stumbling because I was envious of somebody else. Who was better than me.

Who had more than me. Or was more accepted than me. There could be various reasons.

And when I got rid of that envy, then I became pure in heart. And envy comes through comparison. I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

And I compared myself. And he said, verse 13. Why have I kept my heart pure all these years? Why am I so strict in judging myself and doing all these things? And I seem to be suffering.

I've been innocent in my hands. I haven't cheated anyone. But I seem to be suffering, verse 14.

I'm chastened. Every morning. But these wicked, verse 12, they're always at ease.

They're increased in wealth. And this is so true, you know. When we look around at the world today, there are so many people who are evil.

Who prosper. Who prosper in many, many ways. And it's very easy, if we don't get rid of this habit of comparing ourselves with others.

Of wondering, what are we gaining by keeping ourselves pure? Is it only in heaven that we're going to gain something? Isn't God righteous? These questions. And he says, there was one wise thing he did, however. Verse 15, Psalm 73.

He says, I won't speak about this. Because if I speak about this, I'll stumble. Many of the next generation of God's children.

The younger ones, they'll be stumbled if I speak about it. So I'll keep quiet. And that was the one wise thing he did.

Sometimes, you know, when we have thoughts, we should not speak about them. Because you've got to think, is that going to stumble somebody? And then he says, I began to think about it. And I came into the sanctuary of God, verse 17.

And I discovered. They're all in slippery places. But think how I was actually thinking like an animal, verse 22.

I discovered that I have God, and who do I need in heaven but you? I don't need anything on earth besides you, verse 25. You know, when we come to the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 12, we heard also about the importance of fellowship in the body of Christ. It's in the body of Christ.

Within NCCF, the local body. That there can be jealousy. I was envious when I looked at somebody else who had things better than me.

And I didn't think he was so spiritual as I was. But he had it better than me. And then I can, or someone who's more gifted, that's another cause of envy.

You look at someone who is more gifted or more accepted. Or who's sharing. People quote more often than you.

Then what are you sharing? And then you can begin to think like it says in 1 Corinthians 12. 1 Corinthians 12 is a great chapter about the body of Christ. And there it says, 1 Corinthians 12, the foot says, I'm not a hand.

If I'm not a part of the body. You see, the foot is way down. People don't see our feet.

In our day, we're wearing socks or shoes all the time. And they never see our feet. And even in those days, sitting at a table, nobody looks at the feet.

It's the hands that move. The comparison between one member who is more visible and you are so invisible as if you are under the table all the time. It's easy for some sisters to be like that.

Lord, what am I? I'm just an ordinary sister here. And hardly anybody even notices me. And has God made a mistake in making you a woman? Has God made a mistake in not giving you the gifts and abilities that he seems to have given somebody else? Is there partiality with God that he makes somebody like a hand? He's made you like a foot.

And you say, I'm not a part of the body. I've got no function to fulfill. What do you mean you've got no function to fulfill? Where would we be without feet? I'll tell you quite honestly, I'd rather lose a hand than lose two feet.

At least we can move around. Do you really think just because you're not so visible, it doesn't mean you have no function? We spoke about no discouragement and no self-condemnation. That's because of this attitude.

Well, I think I'm a bit worthless compared to the other person. Then you're discouraged or you condemn yourself. Or it says in verse 16, the year, it's comparing.

The spirit of comparison, we've got to eliminate it completely from our life. Comparing ourselves with any other believer in the local church or comparing ourselves with our neighbor, or sometimes very often within a family, comparing ourselves with another family member who seems to be better off. The year says, I'm not an I. Therefore, I'm not a part of the body.

The I is definitely something we value more than the year. I'd be more of a problem if we are blind than if we were deaf. Again, Paul says, remember this, just like the writer of Psalm 73 found comfort when he came to God's presence and discovered God is good.

If my heart is pure, I realize that God is good. So he says in verse 18 of 1 Corinthians 12, it is God who placed the members, each one of them, in the body just as he desired. I want to say to you, it's God who determined.

We read from Psalm 139 earlier, when we were in our mother's womb, God formed us. And when he formed us, he gave us those abilities. Even our physical appearance was all determined then.

And the abilities and gifts, which God knew one day you'd become a child of God, one day you'd be a member of the body of Christ, which were needed for the body of Christ. Even if you were a sister. Maybe you're called to be a single sister all your life.

You read the biographies of some of these amazing single sisters, what they've accomplished. Amy Carmichael, Mary Schleser, read some of these biographies. I would encourage your sisters to read the biographies of women like that, who really accomplished something for God.

And they would not have accomplished that if they were married. So don't condemn yourself and say, oh, well, I'm not married. I can't do anything.

If those sisters had been like that, they would have accomplished nothing. They said, no, it's okay. God allowed it to be like this for me.

I've got a part in the body. Very important. No discouragement.

No self-condemnation. And if God has made you less gifted, it's God who placed the members as he desired. When you were conceived in your mother's womb, he gave you, he made you with less gifts.

And he gave another person more gifts because that person's function is different. You're not less important. The point of this is just because you have less gifts does not mean you're less important.

Sometimes it may be you're more important and you have less gifts. That's what he goes on to say here in verse 23. Think of our human body, he says.

There are some parts of our body which we deem less honorable. But we bestow more abundant honor on them. And some are less presentable, but God has so composed the body, verse 24, that he's given more abundant honor to the members which lacked.

I mean, we know more of the anatomy of the human body now, and we can say that definitely I would rather lose a hand than my kidneys or my heart. Those are invisible. Think of parts of the human body that are invisible.

Some of you, brothers and sisters, probably you never share in the Zoom meetings. Maybe you don't have a gift and nobody asks you. And even if they ask you, you feel very embarrassed.

What can you say? Your personality is so introverted. And you look at that other happy-go-lucky chap who can slap people on the back and say hi and make friends so easily, and you look at yourself who's so withdrawn and reserved, and you wish you were like him. Dear brother or sister, it's God who decided to make you the way you are.

He could have made you like that person. You think that would have been a problem for God when you were in your mother's womb to give you exactly the same personality that he gave that person? And you, sisters, you think God made a mistake in making you a woman? He could have made you a man very easily inside the mother's womb. But he determined.

You've got to understand the sovereignty of God here. That's why I always say go to Psalm 139. Go to Psalm 139 and read it.

He decided what you should be. He formed your inner parts and decided whether you should be a boy or a girl. God in his great wisdom.

You've got to believe God is good. You've got to come to that conclusion. Psalm 73.1, that's the conclusion.

God is good. You have to say he made me with my personality. He did not give me the gifts that he gave the other person.

He made me like a foot, most of the time invisible. That's fine. Lord, I'm going to fulfill a tremendous function as an invisible foot or a kidney or maybe just one of the veins.

Not even an artery, which is more important, but one of the veins running through the body is supplying the blood back into the heart. If I'm only that, Lord, that's fine. Invisible, one of the hundreds of veins in my heart, in my body, just one of them, fine.

If God says, my child, I want you to be one of those invisible veins in the body of Christ, one among hundreds, you're just one of them. You'll never be prominent. You'll never be prominent in NCCF or anywhere to be a great preacher or like the eye or the hand or the tongue or something like that, but you'll fulfill a very important function and you're faithful in that.

One day, when I return, Jesus says, I will show the whole world how you, as an unknown person, you were faithful, never complaining about what sex God made you, man or woman, never complaining about your lack of gifts, never comparing yourself with anybody else, and therefore never discouraged, and therefore never condemning yourself. No entry roads, no discouragement, no condemnation, because you don't compare yourself with the more prominent gifts. And the reason why God has made it like this, it says here in 1 Corinthians 12, 25, there should be no division in the body, but the members must have the same care for one another.

It's a wonderful thing when a church becomes like that, where we're so one with each other that we care for one another. If one member suffers, the others suffer with it. If one member is honored, the other members rejoice with it.

I think the first part is easier for all of us. If one member suffers, boy, we are all ready to pray and help the person even financially or so many ways. But when one member is honored, it's a little more difficult to rejoice with that person.

That shows that there is a part of our Adamic flesh which we haven't crucified. Just as I'm eager to suffer with that brother who's suffering and pray for him and encourage him, I must be equally eager to rejoice with that other person who's more gifted and more capable and support him 100% from behind in prayer, even if nobody knows that I'm the one who's supporting him. What does it matter? It's God who has appointed people in the body.

He finally compares this to the gifts God has given in the body. Just like in the human body, there are many visible parts which are very important. He says in the church also, God has appointed all are not equal in terms of gift and function.

It says in verse 28, first apostles, they are number one in the body. It's not man's decision, it's God who has decided that and nobody can make himself an apostle. You can try as hard as you like and be a false apostle unless God makes you one.

Prophet, you can't be a prophet unless God makes you one. You can't be a teacher unless God makes you one. Miracles, healings, etc.

Are all apostles? No, verse 29. All are not. But desire to be what God wants you to be and accept what God permits in your life.

I think of an example in the Old Testament that came to my mind today. You all know King Hezekiah. By the way, he was one of the good kings in the land of Judah after Israel was split into two.

I want to show you something in 2 Kings. These Old Testament histories have got tremendous lessons for us. Sometimes, for example, to learn to be content with what God tells us.

Here was a very difficult thing that God told Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a very good king. He did a lot of good things.

You know, you read about that. 2 Kings chapter 20. I'm here in 2 Kings chapter 20.

If you turn with me for a moment there. Not all the kings of Judah were good, but Hezekiah was one of the good ones. And I'll tell you, by the way, he was the man who burnt that bronze serpent.

I don't have time to show you that verse. There was a bronze serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness. And the children of Israel were worshipping that.

Even in the days of David. All of David's 40 years as a king. These guys were worshipping that bronze serpent.

He never destroyed it. Hezekiah had light on it. He got destroyed the whole thing.

He said, just a piece of bronze. He said, just because hundreds of years ago God made look at it in the wilderness doesn't mean you keep worshipping it. Okay.

2 Kings 20. Hezekiah was mortally ill. Now, I don't have to show you all the references.

You can see that in Chronicles. He was 25 years old when he became a king. And he had reigned for 14 years.

Did a lot of good. And at the age of 39, God said, through Isaiah, 2 Kings 20, verse 1, you shall die and not live. Hezekiah, your time on earth is over.

How would you feel if you're 39 years old? God says your time on earth is over. I don't think most of us would feel we are ready to go. Neither did Hezekiah feel.

And he turned his face to the Lord. Now, the Lord doesn't make a mistake. He doesn't come and tell you just to tease you.

Hezekiah, please accept my will. Your time is over. Does God change his mind and give people what's not good for them? I want to show you a verse in the Psalms.

Please turn with me to Psalms. Psalm 106. I'll come back to Hezekiah in a moment.

Keep a finger there. Psalm 106. In the wilderness, the Israelites, verse 14.

Psalm 106, verse 14, craved intensely for something. They said, we want meat. We're not satisfied with bread.

And they were tempting God. Verse 15. God gave them their request.

And the margin of my Bible says, but He sent leanness into their souls. Their souls became thin and lean instead of being healthy and strong. He gave them their request, but He sent along with it leanness into their souls.

That happens sometimes. When you decide you want something God doesn't want you to have. God decided you should have manna.

And you say, no, I want something more than that. Okay. You want meat.

God gave them meat, but He sent leanness into their souls. They became fat in their body, but lean in their souls. So God does give something which actually harms you if you keep on persisting in for it.

Second Kings chapter 20, verse 1. God said to Hezekiah when he was 39 years old, it's time for you to die. And he prayed, Oh Lord. Second Kings 20, verse 3. I walk before you in a pure heart and done.

And he wept. And the Lord told Isaiah, okay, verse 4, 5. And go back to him and tell him, I will heal you. Verse 6. I will add 15 years to your life.

You won't. You're only 39. Now you'll die when you're 54.

And Hezekiah was delighted. But Hezekiah said to Isaiah, how will I know? What is the sign that I will live another 15 years? And Isaiah said, what sign do you want? You know, there's a sundial there and those days instead of a clock, they had a sort of a pole which cast a shadow according to the movement of the sun on steps or on the ground to show what is the time. And as the sun moved, the shadow would move.

They know approximately what time it is. And say this shadow of the sun, shall I make it go forward 10 steps? That means the sun goes up in the sky. Or shall I make it go back 10 steps? Should the sun go back in the sky? Hezekiah said, well, the sun going forward in the sky is not a great thing.

Can you make the sun go back in the sky so that the shadow goes back? And it happened. Verse 11. In Joshua's time, the sun stopped.

I mean, geographically, we know it's not the sun that stopped, but in Joshua's time, the earth stopped rotating on its own axis for 24 hours. The earth did not rotate on its axis. It was just there.

And here, the earth, instead of going east to west, went backwards, west to east. I don't know what 10 steps means. Is it half an hour each, five hours back? Or something like that.

They had a 29-hour day that day. Now, see what happened when Hezekiah got 15 more years. It says here in verse 12, the king of Babylon.

I don't have time to compare it with Chronicles. You see that this thing, the whole world saw this. Hey, what happened? The sun's going back and coming back five hours.

And in Babylon, they heard about that. And the news went around. This is because of what happened to Hezekiah in Israel.

So he came with the present to Hezekiah. And Hezekiah got so puffed up that these people around the world are coming to see this great wonder that happened through me. And he ruined himself.

And he showed this king of Babylon all the treasures in his house. And Isaiah came to him and said in verse 14, what have you shown these people? He said, I've shown them everything in my house. Verse 15, the last part.

And Isaiah told him, well, all that you showed them is all going to be stolen in the days of your children. These people from Babylon will come and capture the city. But that's not the worst part.

He got an extra 15 years. You know what happened in those 15 years? His son was born three years after he was supposed to have died. He was supposed to have died at the age of 39.

And if he had accepted the will of God, he would have gone. At the age of 42, he got a son called Manasseh. And when Hezekiah died at the age of 54, so verse chapter 21, verse 1, Manasseh was 12 years old.

And he became king, a child who would never have been born if Hezekiah had accepted the will of God. But this Manasseh grew up and verse 2, did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all the abominations of the nations. And he reigned, verse 1, 55 years.

He was the worst king of Judah. For 55 years, he destroyed the nation of Judah because his father didn't accept the will of God. He was not content with what God had given.

Others are living 50, 60 years, Lord. Why me only 39 years? Jesus lived only 33. It could be many things that... I believe we should try to live as long as we can.

I'm not in a hurry to die myself, even though I'm 81. I say, Lord, I want to live totally for you. But if God says one day, your time is up.

Like God told Paul, it says, Paul says, the Lord showed me time is up He said, bro, I'm ready to go. The huge areas of the world I'd like to evangelize. Paul says, if you've told me my time is up, praise the Lord, I'll go.

He was so different from Hezekiah. To be content in whatever God permits. Lord, I accept it.

God is sovereign, my brother, sister. So, if you want to avoid discouragement and self-condemnation, here's one thing to remember. Never compare yourself with another person in any area.

Length of life, how well his wife cooks, or stupid things like that, or what a good house he has, or even worse, what a good car he has. Things like that. Second Corinthians, chapter 10.

Very important verse. Second Corinthians, chapter 10, and verse 12. The last part.

Second Corinthians, chapter 10, and verse 12. The last part. Those who compare themselves with themselves are without understanding.

Or my paraphrase is, they are spiritual idiots. If you want to be a spiritual idiot, here is the prescription. Guaranteed success.

You'll become a spiritual idiot. Compare yourself with somebody else. In some area.

And be puffed up, because you're better than him, you'll become a spiritual idiot. Or get discouraged, because he's better than you, you'll become a spiritual idiot. Whichever way.

Those who compare themselves with one another don't have any understanding. Or without understanding, they need to come into the sanctuary of God, like Asaf did in Psalm 73, and discover that God is good. He has decided everything about me.

I accept the fact that you made me what I am, Lord. The sex, the gender that you decided I should have, I accept it. The personality that I have, so reserved, inward looking.

It's funny. I've got a very important contribution to make in the body of Christ. And I want to fulfill it.

Maybe you're going to make me a prayer warrior. A prayer warrior is like the heart. Never seen.

Bumps, bumps, bumps, bumps, bumps, bumps. No appreciation. People don't even think of their heart until they get a heart attack.

It's been pumping for every single day. Think of how many hours that heart pumped in your body all these years. Where would you be without it? And I've seen that.

I've seen in my life very definitely. I'm immensely thankful for those who pray for me when I speak. They're the heart that pumps, that give me the words to speak.

There's a tremendous function in these invisible members of the body of Christ. Never compare yourself with others, otherwise you'll be without understanding. So we pray that we will be able to say like that psalmist said in Psalm 73, God is certainly good.

God is good all the time. I have no complaints about anything. I will not compare myself with anybody else.

Where I have failed in the past, I will repent, and I believe it will go better with me in the days to come. Amen.

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