

Being Righteous, Merciful And Humble

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of doing what is right, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. It highlights the need to wait on the Lord for guidance, be merciful to others as God has been merciful to us, and clothe ourselves with humility to receive God's grace. The speaker encourages a deep reliance on the Holy Spirit for strength to live out these principles.

Scripture: John 8:3, Micah 6:8, 1 Peter 5:5, Romans 6:14, Matthew 7:1, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Doing What is Right", "Humility and Mercy"

Description

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Transcript

Praise the Lord, brothers and sisters. That's a wonderful verse that we just read, but there's an if there, and whenever there's an if, it means that there's a condition. If the condition is not fulfilled, the promise is not fulfilled.

So what is the condition for the Lord to fight for us in every single situation? When people come to fight with us, keep silent. I remember a man of God gave me that advice 60 years ago. I was 23 years old, and he gave me three bits of advice.

One, never tell your earthly needs to any human being. I followed it for 60 years, never asked anybody for money. Second, he said, live very, very simply.

Don't waste money on unnecessary luxuries. I followed that for 60 years. The third thing he said was, when people accuse you, keep quiet.

I followed that also for 60 years. So from my experience, I can tell you, the Lord will fight for you if you keep silent. It's a wonderful promise.

It's not something you must just memorize at the beginning of the year and forget about, but please remember it every day, because the world is full of people who want to fight. That's the devil's nature. Fight, accuse, criticize, in all those situations.

It can be in your family. We faced it from family members. Keep quiet.

You know that beautiful verse in Psalm 46, the same connection. It's a wonderful verse. I remember memorizing it as a young man.

Psalm 46, verse 10. There are many translations of that verse. Here it says, cease striving and know that I am God.

In one translation, it is be still or be silent and know that I am God. Or let go, relax. These are all the various translations of that verse.

Let go. Don't hang on and fight. Relax, be silent and be still and know that I'm God.

We won't know Him as God unless we stop fighting. There's a beautiful example of that, which I've never forgotten, in 2 Chronicles chapter 20. These Old Testament stories have got spiritual lessons in them.

It says here that King Jehoshaphat was a pretty good king compared to the kings of Judah. He was the king, sorry, kings of Israel. He was the king of Judah.

News came to him in verse 2. 2 Chronicles 20, verse 2. A great multitude is coming against you. Have you ever found that in your life where sometimes it's not just one problem. When a problem comes, multitudes of them come together at the same time.

Somebody's sick and there's a problem in the office and there's some other problems with your relatives, all coming at the same time. A great multitude. Sometimes problems come individually.

But when they all come together, it's like a great multitude has come against you. And Jehoshaphat is afraid. And we can also be afraid.

But what he did was he began to seek the Lord. That's how the fear goes away. And you've seen the story how his fear went away.

He did not keep his fear. In this world, it is natural to fear all human beings. In fact, if you look at the Gospels, one of the most frequent statements of Jesus was, fear not, fear not, fear not.

Even after the resurrection, he told people, fear not, don't be afraid. There are two things Jesus said, don't sin and don't be afraid. And both those things are not emphasized sufficiently in Christendom.

Don't sin. Don't be afraid. We have preached a lot in this church on don't sin.

I think we also need to preach on don't be afraid. And how did he get over his fear? He sought the Lord. The fear comes, seek the Lord.

And he prayed, and sometimes fast and pray. That's what he did. And a message, and he claimed the promise.

You read the rest of that, those verses, he claimed the promises. Lord, you promised this, you promised this, you said this, you said this. And then the Lord, and he finally acknowledged in verse 12, sometimes it's something I always remember, three things in 2 Chronicles 20 verse 12.

We don't have power, we don't have wisdom to handle this, but our eyes are on you. I preached on that for many, many years. When you're in a problem, say three things to the Lord.

Lord, we don't have the power to handle this. Second, we don't have the wisdom. We don't know what to do.

But third, don't forget the third one, but we're looking to you to see us through this situation. I want to tell you, my brothers and sisters, I don't care what situation you're going to face in 2024 or until Jesus comes. 2 Chronicles 20 has the answer.

Turn to the Lord when you're afraid and say, we don't have the power, we don't have the wisdom. Don't stop there, but our eyes are on you. We're trusting you.

And then the word of the Lord came through a prophet in verse 15 and 16. Go against them. Verse 17, this is a great verse.

It applies to us too. You don't have to fight. You stand still and see the deliverance the Lord will bring for you.

Again, don't be afraid. Go out. The Lord is with you.

These are the verses you must remember in the Old Testament, some significant verses like those who honor me, I will honor, 1 Samuel 2.30. And here's 2 Chronicles 20.17. You know, if you have the habit of underlining or coloring with red color or certain verses, here are some very important verses. I used to do that with my first Bible so that I could quickly look at some of these promises. Powerful promises.

You don't have to fight. Don't be afraid. Go forth.

The Lord is with you. Think if you can face that the rest of the year like that, whatever situation may arise, you don't have to fight. We know in the New Testament, Ephesians 6.12 says, we do not fight with flesh and blood.

It's a very important verse. I remember in the early days after the baptism of the Holy Spirit, one of the things I found God gave me the anointing to do was to cast out demons and to stand against the devil. And that's the verse that came to me, Ephesians 6.12. We do not fight with flesh and blood, but with evil principalities and powers.

And what the Lord said to me from that is, if you want to have strength to fight against the devil, whether it's casting out demons or fighting with Satan and other problems, refuse to fight with human beings. Make a decision in your life. I will never fight with any human being.

Lord, I'll never fight with my wife. I'll never fight with my husband. I'll never fight with my relatives.

They may cheat me. They may rob me. They may hurt me.

They may criticize me and speak evil at me and yell at me. I will not fight with anyone. I will not fight with people in the office.

I will not fight with the auto rickshaw driver who wants to charge more. I will not fight with the porter in the railway station who argues with me or anybody in the world. I will not fight.

I will not raise my voice and yell at someone. And the Lord said, if you do that, you won't have power against Satan. So please remember that throughout this year.

Every time you fight with a human being, you're saying, Lord, I don't want power against Satan. I want to settle scores with this guy. I want to settle scores with my wife, my husband, my relatives.

The Lord says, okay, go ahead. Satan will overpower you. I really believe that Satan overpowers many believers.

Many of you sitting here in the past because you have not obeyed Ephesians 6 verse 12. We do not fight against human beings. I followed that verse for a number of years.

And I tell you, it gives me good sleep at night. I don't lie down tossing in my bed and wondering, what shall I tell this guy now? If this chap comes to me tomorrow, what am I going to tell him? I have nothing to tell him. I say, I've got nothing to say.

If he comes to me, I say, I've got nothing to say. I've said that to many people. I'm sorry, I've got nothing to say.

You can keep on saying, I've got nothing to say. And I'll tell you, in every single case, the Lord keeps his word. You shall not need to fight.

The Lord will fight for you. Why not experience this in this coming year? It's one thing to read it in scripture. It's quite another thing to experience it in life.

So you know what they did the next day when the enemy came and they went out to battle? You know, today they go with guns and all those days they went with bows and arrows. And that's how Israel went to battle. But Yahushapat said, all these people, bows and arrows, go back.

We don't want you. In front he appointed, verse 21, those who would sing and praise the Lord. Imagine putting the choir in front of the army.

No weapons. They're just going to praise the Lord. The whole lot of people in there.

The enemy was wondering, what type of army is this? Everybody raising their hands and praising the Lord and coming to fight. No bows and arrows. What did the Lord do? As soon as, verse 22.

It's a beautiful chapter, 2 Chronicles 20. Read it sometime leisurely at home. As soon as they began singing and praising, the Lord defeated all those enemies.

Verse 2, the great multitude. Verse 22, the Lord defeated all of them. And when Judah came to look at the wilderness, all of them were lying on the ground dead.

Not even one had escaped. Meaning, not even one problem remained unsolved. Would you like to have that testimony on December 31st this year? That not one problem remained unsolved? I want that.

I'm not expecting a year without problems. As long as we live on this earth, we'll have problems. The early Christians face much more in China today.

They're persecuted. They have to hide and have their meetings secretly, and they get captured and put into prison. They're tortured.

So many Christians are tortured in the first two, three centuries. It was really bad. For us, it is so comfortable.

But I don't know, sometimes like that may come in India. In North India, there are many Christians who are persecuted even today. Churches that are burned.

Pastors who are killed. Yeah, it hasn't come down to the South as yet. But it doesn't matter.

When you think of the first three centuries, what tremendous boldness they had. God gave them that boldness through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why I have often said, dear brothers and sisters, seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day.

Seek for a mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit. Your own strength is not enough. We want the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life, not to preach.

Most of you are not called to preach. 99.9% of you are not called to preach. But of course, you need the anointing of the Holy Spirit to preach.

But other than that, you need the power of the Holy Spirit just to live the Christian life. Be filled with the Spirit is not just for preachers. In fact, the word be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5.18 is followed by wives, submit to your husbands.

Husbands, love your wives. How? Be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's not regarding to preaching at all.

Bring up your children in the fear of the Lord. Those are the things mentioned after being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5 and 6. So it's normal daily life for which you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And I want to ask you for your normal daily life at home and in the office.

Are you seeking God to be filled with the Holy Spirit? If not, start today. When you get up in the morning, say, Heavenly Father, I love you. Thank you for your love for me.

I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit today. I'm not looking for an experience. I want the power to overcome sin, the power to control my tongue.

James chapter 3 says nobody can control the tongue. So many animals have been tamed. You go to the circus and zoo and you see elephants and lions tamed, but the tongue has not been tamed by most people.

Which is stronger, that lion or your tongue? Our tongue has not been tamed. That's James chapter 3, by the way. We need the power of the Holy Spirit.

And I believe that is the reason why on the first day when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in a language they had never learned called speaking in unknown tongues. That means the Holy Spirit controlled their tongue and gave them words to speak. It was not like somebody manipulating and controlling from outside.

He gave them the ability to speak. I believe God gives me the ability to speak right now, God's words. But he gave them the ability to speak in an unknown language.

And then, so the tongue was important. At the same time, a tongue of fire appeared on top of all of their heads, 120. What is the message in that? They're speaking in unknown tongues and the tongue of fire on top.

God was saying in the Old Testament, he used many, many instruments. But in the New Covenant, it is the tongue that God is going to use most, more than any other part of the human body. That was the message on the Day of Pentecost.

And that's why the devil wants to control your tongue. It's like in the old days, they would neutralize the weapons of the enemy. It says the Philistines, when they fought against Israel, they would get rid of all these people who could sharpen the spears and the swords.

They got rid of them, so Israel was left with nobody to sharpen their spears and swords. That is a very strategic act that the Philistines did. That's what the devil does.

Neutralize these people's tongues, so that their tongues can never be used for God. Make them tell lies. Make them fight with their wives and husbands and everybody in the office.

Make them yell at people, and their tongue will never be used by God. And that is the main instrument God wants to use. That's the message on the Day of Pentecost.

Tongue of fire, speaking in tongues. It's not the hand or the ear or eye. All that is useful, but the tongue.

And so we see here, they use their tongues to praise the Lord, and the Lord defeated their enemies. These things are written for our instruction. I also want to turn you to a verse in the book of Micah.

You know where Micah is? It's immediately Obadiah, Jonah. You know the story of Jonah? Immediately after that is Micah, before Nahum. Micah chapter 6. Like I've often said, please read these small, what are called minor prophets, because you'll meet them in heaven.

They'll ask you, did you read my book? You'll say, yes brother. You say, no. You say, I wrote only two pages.

You didn't have time to read it. Obadiah wrote one page. Don't be ashamed when you meet him.

Okay, Micah chapter 6, verse 8. This is one of the great verses in the Old Testament. Just like 2 Chronicles 20, that verse I read in verse 12, and what we read in Exodus about be still and the Lord will fight for you. And 1 Samuel, those who honor me I'll honor.

These are some great verses you must remember. And if you can't easily find them, highlight them with some light red pencil or something, so that you can easily find them when you open your Bible. Especially the promises, very, very important.

So here's Micah 6, 8, another great verse. God has told you, oh man, what is good. He's told you what's good for you.

What does the Lord want from you? And this is true in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. To do what is right, justice. To love kindness or mercy.

And to walk humbly with your God. First of all, I want to think of these three things, to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. And you remember those three things? Micah 6, verse 8. He has told you, oh mortal human being, you who will die so soon, you man, if you want eternal values, concentrate on this.

First of all, do justice means, think of a judge who's in a court. Justice is a court word. Think of a judge who is absolutely upright, who's got a reputation to be the most upright person in the whole country.

He will not show favoritism even to his own son or relatives or anybody. Absolutely upright. Justice.

To do what is right, that means he has to listen carefully. You know, in the courts and all, I have heard sometimes a case goes on for six months. They argue back and forth and back and forth and back and forth.

And finally, the judge has to write down the judgment. And sometimes I've heard that the judge writes 500 pages. And then at the conclusion, he says, therefore, because of these 500 pages, I come to this conclusion.

This person has done this or this person has not done this. It's not just that they heard for one day and say, OK, I'll give a judgment. We're like that.

We hear something. We haven't even verified it with that person. And we go and talk about it all over town.

Hey, did you hear this? Are you fit to be a chief justice in a court? Who spends six months to try and analyze something and writes 500 pages before he says, here's my conclusion. Those justices have put me to shame. I said, Lord, I made the mistake many times.

I'm ashamed that I have heard something and I immediately formed a judgment without even confirming it with the other person. Is it right? And then finding out the reason and analyzing it and slowly, slowly coming to a judgment. That is the first thing God requires from you.

Will you do that from now on? How quickly we can punish our children. I've done it. I'm ashamed to say I never had victory over anger when my children were small.

And sometimes I punished them with anger and I would go and lock myself under the toilet and weep and say, Lord, forgive me. The punishment is right. The anger was wrong.

And when they grew up, I apologized to the children later on for the anger. So often we have that habit of forming a judgment quickly. Let's keep this in mind this year, not to form a judgment too soon.

Listen carefully. Did your wife do something wrong? Did you come back from work in the office and discover, like I've said, some important message she forgot to give you? Don't jump and say, why did you do it? Listen. Maybe children were sick.

Maybe she was busy with so many other things that she was doing for you. And I'll tell you this, the world is not going to collapse just because your wife did not give you that information. The world will go on and you're not going to die tomorrow just because she didn't give you that information.

Do justice. Do what is right. Listen carefully.

Whenever you hear something, listen carefully. Find out from the other person, if you're a father or an elder or something like that, is there truth in this? I'm not saying that people will come and tell you lies, but they must have heard it like that. The most famous story, I've often quoted, some of you know it, but if you haven't heard it, I'll tell you today.

Many years ago in a conference that we used to have in that Campus Crusade grounds, after the meeting was over, people were sitting out in the open, a few young people sitting and there was smoke coming up from their midst. And one young man, one young boy, I don't know, maybe he was 10 years old, ah, some CFC brothers are smoking. And he went and told his mother, mom, I saw these children smoking.

And one of them was my son. And the mother, foolish woman that she was, she's not in our midst today, they've left the church. Went around telling everybody, these young brothers were smoking.

I heard it. So I asked my son, what was happening there? He said, we young people were sitting and there were a lot of mosquitoes. So we burnt one of those mosquito coils, you know, which we have in India to drive away the mosquitoes.

And the mosquito coil will send a smoke up so that the mosquitoes go away. And from a distance, it looked as if somebody's smoking. But I later on told that sister, I think, I said, once you've spread this news all over, are you going to get it back now? Are you going to go and tell all of them that you told a lie? No, she never said that.

She was too proud. An example is, if you have a pillow stuffed with a lot of feathers, and one day you open it and put all the feathers fly away, and then can you make that pillow back again? Very difficult. Pluck each feather back.

Very dangerous to go around spreading a story, like those opening that pillow and letting the feathers all fly out and then try to put that all back in again. Much better that you don't open that pillow and let the feathers fly, spreading the story. There's a tremendous lust in all of us to be the first person to spread some news, especially if it's bad news.

The gospel is called the good news. That is what we should have a great desire to spread. There's a guy who's come to see me.

He's not a Christian. He's not heard the good news that Jesus died for his sins, that he need not go to hell, let him go to heaven. That's the greatest news in the world.

How eager are you to spread that news? I've tried my best. I'm not perfect. I'm not an evangelist.

That's not my primary gift. But even though I'm not an evangelist, I've said, Lord, make me a witness. Jesus said, you shall be my witnesses.

The Holy Spirit will come on you, and you shall be my witnesses. So I try to be wherever I'm staying, somewhere in a hotel or somewhere like we're living in an apartment now. I said, Lord, there's somebody at the reception desk.

Not the very first day, but try and be friendly with that person generally. And then one day, witness. I said, Lord, give me a chance.

And one day I could give a tract about salvation to that person. Another time, somebody came. He was a non-Christian.

He came to our room to fix something on the internet. And a family picture was there. He said, oh, that's your family.

I said, that's my family. I've got many grandchildren. And then I could open the conversation and say, God's been good to me.

I gave him the gospel and gave him a little tract when he went away. He got a blessing. By coming to fix my internet.

Always there are people around us. I'm not saying we must thrust it on people, but ask God to give an opening to you. I don't witness to everybody.

When I'm sitting in a bus or a train or something, I say, Lord, or in a plane, give me a chance to witness, Lord, if it's your will. If you're sitting next to somebody, this is what I did once in a plane. I took out my Bible on my phone.

Sometimes people sitting next to you like to see what you're reading on the phone. They're very inquisitive. And I knew this guy would look at my phone and he'd read the Bible.

And if he has any interest, he'll start talking to me. He was sitting in one seat. His wife was sitting in another seat.

He saw this and he got up and went away. I told his wife to come and sit there. Okay.

I didn't open my mouth, but I discovered this guy has no interest. So if you ask the Lord, he'll show you ways by which to find out, does this guy have an interest or not? I don't want to thrust something down his throat. But all I say is, always be ready.

Lord, I'm ready to be a witness for you, to anybody, to let the light shine. I remember once I was sitting in a train and I just boarded the train. The train hadn't started from the station here in Bangalore some years ago.

And there was somebody sitting there. And amazingly, an opportunity came up to share the gospel in a very short time. Before even the train started, there was nobody else in the compartment.

The other hadn't come. I had gone early. And I got a chance to speak to him.

And a little later, he discovered that he was sitting in the wrong compartment. And he went away. I said, thank you, Lord, that he came to the wrong compartment.

Because he had to hear the gospel. I've had some interesting experiences like that. Years ago, one of the first times I witnessed a people was when I went into a park and I saw an old man sitting there.

I sat next to him. I spoke to him in Hindi and then slowly gave him the gospel. Dear brothers and sisters, always be ready.

The Bible says, always be ready to give an answer to him who asks you of the hope that is in you. 1 Peter. It's a great verse.

Always be ready. I think it's 1 Peter chapter 3. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks. And sometimes they may not ask.

Another thing I've been greatly encouraged by is Joseph. You want to know how he came out of prison? Listen to this. How did Joseph come out of prison? He was 13 years in prison, falsely accused in Egypt.

But he didn't sit there complaining against his brothers or complaining against God, even though he did not know Romans 8:28. It was not written those days. He believed God is in control. He was upright.

He refused to commit adultery with the woman who tempted him. And he was imprisoned for that. And he was so much in touch with God that he was concerned about other people.

He saw two people sitting there discouraged. And he went up to them and said, why are you discouraged? And they told him that they had a strange dream. And he explained the dream to them.

And the dream was fulfilled for Pharaoh's cupbearer. And Pharaoh released him from prison. And two years later, he completely forgot.

Joseph said, please tell Pharaoh that I'm unjustly treated here. He completely forgot. People are ungrateful.

But at the right time, that also God arranged it, because God's plan was Joseph should not become the ruler till he's 30 years old. And this was when he was 28. So God made that man forget for two years.

Then Pharaoh had a dream. And then that cupbearer said, oh yeah, I remember two years ago, there was a man who explained my dream. Pharaoh said, bring him here.

That is how Joseph became the ruler in Egypt. For a long time, for 100 years. And that's how he brought his family there.

But how did it all start? It started with, he saw two people discouraged. And he asked them, why are you discouraged? I have thought about that instance. When I read something like that, I apply it to myself.

If I find somebody discouraged in the office, I remember I was on a ship. And at least two instances, I had to talk to people and bring them to Christ. One was a Hindu and one was a nominal Christian.

Just being alert. You know, it could be somebody in your office who's looking a bit gloomy. Some one day and you go up to him and say, hey, you're feeling down today.

Can I help you in some way? You're not preaching the gospel, you're just being good to him. The door will slowly open. Don't push.

When you go to somebody's house, you knock. You don't push the door. So this is a way of knocking.

Hi, are you feeling a bit down today? Can I help you? That's knocking at the door. And if the door opens, go in and give the gospel. Very wonderful way to reach out to people.

So I was starting with this. Be very righteous when you hear something. Don't form a judgment initially, but be alert.

That person in prison may be unjustly put there. I was reading some time the other day, something that really struck me. When you hear that somebody has got this terrible disease called AIDS, what is it that comes to your mind first of all? I know in the olden days what used to come to my mind.

Boy, that guy deserves it for going and committing unnatural sex. That's how AIDS usually started and doing those wrong things. But then I read something.

You know, if a person is, a little child can be injected with a needle that is infected by someone who had AIDS. And that little child gets AIDS. So some people have got AIDS not by any sexual activity, but just because an injection was given to them by a nurse who did not clean the needle.

And I said, Lord, forgive me. How quickly I judge people. That guy's got AIDS.

He deserves it. Because he's a sexual sin. I learned from that.

Don't be so quick to judge people for sexual sin. It may not be. They got it probably from an infected needle.

I'm just telling you one or two possibilities. Apply that to so many other areas where we judge. What does the Lord require of you first of all? Do justice.

Don't be quick to judge. And Matthew 7, don't condemn. Condemning is the worst part.

The word don't judge in Matthew 7 means don't condemn people. He got AIDS because of this. No, no, no.

It was an infected needle, innocent person. Okay, second requirement is be kind or be merciful. That means you see now you see that somebody has definitely made a mistake.

What shall we do then? Bring a harsh judgment on that person? No. Think how God has treated you when you've made a mistake. How many mistakes, we call it mistakes, God calls it sin.

How many things we have done wrong? Did God jump on us immediately? None of us would be sitting in the meeting today if God had done that. Love, mercy, do justice, love, mercy. Like we said last Sunday, the worst for CFC for this New Year is they're at the back.

Be merciful to others just as God has been merciful to you. It's not just be merciful to others. Compare it with God's mercy on you.

That's what it says. Be merciful to others exactly as God has been merciful to you. That's a very high standard.

When will I reach it? Help me Lord to press on. You know we try to press on to become more Christ-like. Here is one area where we can become more Christ-like and I'll tell you I've been tremendously impressed by one particular story of Jesus.

You all know the story but I never meditated on it sufficiently until recently and that is John's Gospel chapter 8. You know the story, the Pharisees verse 3, John 8 verse 3, caught a woman in adultery and brought her to Jesus and saying, Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, there's no doubt about it. And verse 5, Moses commanded, he's referring to the law which Jesus once said, I have come to fulfill the

law. He said in Matthew Okay, you came to fulfill the law, Lord Jesus.

They didn't call him Lord Jesus. What do you say? Moses said, stone her to death. What do you say? Is Jesus going to go against the law? The woman was caught in adultery.

It's not an accusation. You're caught in the act. There's no doubt about it.

And so there was no need for Jesus to verify to find out is it true or not. What do you do when there's a clear command of God? Stone the woman. And Jesus is here.

And Jesus said, he waited for a little while because he's saying, Father, what shall I say? I like that. I learned something there. He was cribbling on the ground.

Father, what shall I say? Father said, tell them the one is without sin, cast the first stone. So he said it. Isn't it wonderful to listen? And somebody's, even something, somebody's caught in the act.

No doubt about it. And you know what the Word of God says, how to deal with this. You still wait on the Lord.

You need to wait on the Lord. And God's Word is written clearly. Yes.

That's what I learned there. What should I wait on? Not to change the Word of God. How shall I apply that Word in this situation to this person? My natural tendency is to be hard.

Quote that verse. We use God's Word like a hammer. Many preachers are like that.

They like to give helmets to everybody in the church because God's Word is like a hammer. No. Father, I know this is written in your Word, Father.

How shall I apply it? Tell the one who is without sin to cast the first stone. What a wonderful answer. I have got answers like that sometimes from the Lord.

I've been tremendously encouraged by that. Wait on the Lord for an answer. Don't fight back.

I remember I was sitting, you probably heard this, I visited a church once in America. But everybody grew beards. Everybody.

I mean, not the women, but all the men. That was part of their law. And it was a group that didn't have cars.

They rode in horse carriages. The first time I got a ride in a horse carriage there in the US. And then at lunchtime, we were all sitting at the table, everybody in a beard.

I'd already preached one or two messages and they felt very convicted and some of them were angry with me because we preached against things they had never heard before, against sin. So they didn't know how to express their anger against me, but they wanted to humiliate me. And one of them asked me, Brother Zach, did God make a mistake by giving you hair in your face, or did you make a mistake by shaving it off? They were saying they did not make that mistake.

They all grew their beard. It was exactly like this. I didn't scribble on the ground.

I was at a dining table. I said, Lord, what shall I say to these people? And the Lord gave me an answer. Did God make a mistake in giving you nails in your fingers, or did you make a mistake by cutting off those nails and they become long? The whole table was silent for the rest of the lunch.

I'll never forget that instance. I learned that God can give you the right word. It wasn't offensive.

They were trying to pin me down. And I didn't say, oh, there's no such law in scripture. No, I just said something gently.

And then I did not continue on that. I didn't sort of hammer that. You know, sometimes we win a point and we want to hammer it, hammer it.

And I kept quiet. I left it there and changed the subject and went on to something else. But they got the message.

Anyway, these people got the message and they all went away. All these, nobody to stone. But one man was left who had never committed sin, Jesus.

And he had himself said, the person without sin can throw the first stone. So there are two commands now. One is the Old Testament command of Moses.

And now the New Testament command Jesus himself gave. What do you do? When there's such a clear command, the woman must be stoned. He said, has nobody condemned you? John 8, 10.

He said, no one, Lord. It was obvious he was repentant. And look at these beautiful words of Jesus.

Facing a clear command of Moses and the clear command he gave, I will not stone you. I don't condemn you. You know, a Pharisee will say, Jesus disobeyed the law.

Sometimes we can be like that. We interpret a law without mercy. That's a fundamental problem of many Christians.

I know because I've done it myself, but I repented terribly, strongly of it. I said, Lord, I want to learn something from this. I don't want to take a verse of scripture and hammer people on the head with it, make life miserable for them.

Be merciful to others. Just as God has been merciful to you when you disobeyed scripture, did God use a hammer to hit your head with it? Boy, there'd be nothing left of us if God had used a hammer. Think of the number of times he said to us, to you and me individually, I do not condemn you.

Have you heard it? I've heard it umpteen times in my life, small things, big things. I do not condemn you. Did you get angry? Did you yell at your wife or husband? You said, sorry, you did it again, and you did it again, and you did it again.

This woman did it once. How many times have you done it? And he always said, I don't condemn you. Go, don't sin again.

But we've sinned again. And he still says, I don't condemn you. This is our savior.

Have you seen it? Love mercy. Not just do mercy, but love it. You know, when you love your children, you go and hug them.

I hope you do that to your wife too, or your husband. When you love people, you hug them. I want to hug mercy like that, to love mercy so much that I first think of being merciful to somebody rather than condemning somebody.

I hope we'll remember that all through this year, this year, until Jesus comes. What does God require of you? Do what is right. Listen carefully to all the points.

You get all the complete picture, like the judges who wait six months and write 500 pages before they make a judgment. We don't have to go that far, but at least evaluate. Don't immediately, you heard something today and immediately you pass on that to other people.

Did you hear this? No, no, no, no. Please, my brothers and sisters, stop this habit of as soon as you hear something, the itch to go and tell somebody about it, to call up somebody. Did you hear this? Stop it from today onwards.

Let this new year be a special year where that is finished. Love mercy. Maybe after investigation you'll find it is true.

Love mercy. And finally, Micah 6.8. Walk humbly with your God. You can't walk humbly if you don't do these two things first.

When you walk humbly with God, you know what will happen? God gives His grace to the humble. An umbrella of grace will come upon you, Romans 6.14. And like when you have an umbrella, the rain cannot fall on you. When grace is over you, sin cannot overpower you.

Romans 6.14. Sin shall not rule over you when you are under grace. And how does it come? How can you walk humbly with your God? God gives His grace to the humble. 1 Peter chapter 5. I'll conclude with this.

1 Peter 5. You younger men, and applies to everyone, Peter 5.5. All of you, not only young men, especially young men, but it goes on to say all of you, clothe yourself with humility towards one another. Why? Because God gives grace to the humble, but He will oppose you otherwise. He'll be your enemy.

So what does it mean to clothe yourself with humility? Read slowly. Read scripture slowly. Think how you clothe yourself.

How did you clothe yourself this morning? Did anybody come here in pyjamas or your lungi or something? There's nothing wrong in that. But you didn't do that. In the villages sometimes they do that.

That's a normal dress. But whatever it is, they clothe themselves that way and you clothe yourself. The point is, you don't appear naked.

You don't appear before people naked. Even in your house, some visitor comes to your house, you don't walk in naked. What would you think if you walk into a house and the person walks in to greet you naked? You'll close the door and go away and say, I'm sorry.

Now let me explain it. When you're not clothed with humility, you are naked. Many people come to church naked.

Naked before God because they are proud. Proud. I belong to CFC, not all those other dead churches.

I'm one of the good people in this church. I have a reputation. I've got a reputation with the elders.

You're naked sister. You're naked brother. Next time please wear clothes and come to the church.

The only clothes that God respects is humility. That's God's word. Clothe yourself with humility.

That means if you're not clothed with humility, you are naked. There are many naked husbands and wives, many naked young people. Teach them to put on their clothes.

You parents, teach your children to put on clothes and you husbands and wives start wearing clothes instead of walking around the house naked, going to office naked. Do what is right. Be just.

Love mercy. When you hear the truth, love mercy and clothe yourself with humility and walk with God. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we need the power of the Holy Spirit for all these three to do what is right, to love mercy and to walk humbly with you. Please fill us with the Holy Spirit. Create in every brother and sister here a tremendous hunger and cry.

We fill with the Holy Spirit. We cannot do this on our own. We'll try and we'll fail.

We'll try to do right and we'll try to love mercy and we'll try to walk humbly and we'll fail, fail, fail, fail. We have tried before and we failed. So now we seek you for the power of your Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, please have mercy on everybody here and fill us with the Holy Spirit. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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