

(Christian Leadership) the Aroma of Christ

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of reflecting Christ correctly, being humble, and serving others without making them feel small, in order to be a true Christian leader.

Duration: 1:23:02

Scripture: Job 33:7, Matthew 6:33, Luke 22:40, John 13:34-35, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 2:15, Colossians 4:17

Topics: "Christian Witness", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of giving words of encouragement to our loved ones. He challenges listeners to reflect on whether they are truly living like Christ and spreading a positive aroma through their actions and words. The speaker encourages believers to be a blessing wherever they go and to speak words that God can use to touch people's hearts. He also highlights the need for Christians to live in such a way that others see Christ in them, even if they never see them again. The speaker criticizes the degradation of the concept of being witnesses for Christ and urges believers to take their walk with God seriously, rather than comparing themselves to other Christians. He warns against the decay and corruption in Christendom and emphasizes the importance of serving others rather than seeking distance and awe like royalty.

Transcript

I want to thank all those who pray for me. I really appreciate that. You know, one of the things that I keep asking myself in my own country, where eighty percent of my ministry is in any case, is, am I reflecting Christ correctly to my nation, to the people of my nation I meet? Doctrinally, we can be right, and yet Christ may not be reflected in our lives.

This is the thing I keep asking myself. Jesus said that when the Comforter has come, the Holy Spirit, He will take of the things of mine and show them unto you. And if we are walking with the Lord, one mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit of God constantly shows us something more about Jesus, something that we can see about Him, something of His glory.

From the scriptures, some passage that we may have read for twenty-five years, all of a sudden we see something of Jesus there that we've never seen before. And in that light, we see our own need. I don't believe that we should be looking inward.

It's not God's way. We don't run the race looking inward. A lot of people who pursue holiness, I've seen this mistake made by people in our church back in Bangalore, and even in all the other churches God's raised up.

We preach holiness, and one big mistake people make is to look inward. That only brings depression. There's nothing good in our place.

I believe a spiritual man is one who looks upward first. He sees Jesus, and in the light of the glory of Jesus that the Holy Spirit shows him, he sees his own need. And when we see it like that, we don't get discouraged.

Looking inward can be a psychological way of trying to improve our life. In Hinduism, there's a lot of teaching of self-improvement. And I found a lot of Christians, their holiness is a form of self-improvement.

They look at certain areas in their life and try to improve it. But that's not God's way. That brings a lot of heaviness, depression, bondage, and very often a lot of pride that I'm better than somebody else.

But when we have that genuine holiness, and it says in Ephesians 4.22, the holiness of truth. And that means a holiness which is reality. Just read that verse, Ephesians 4.24. It says, In other words, true holiness.

And holiness of the truth means a holiness which is real, or a holiness which is no illusion. Many Christians pursuing holiness have a holiness which is an illusion. They're holy in their own eyes.

And if there's one thing I've feared, it's that. To be holy in my own eyes. If I discover at the judgment seat of Christ that some of the holiness I had was not real holiness at all, just an illusion, it wasn't Christ-like, it would be too late to do anything about it.

And so a spiritual man looks at Jesus, then in that light he sees himself. And I thought of this verse in 2 Corinthians 2, where Paul says, Thanks be to God, who always leads us in his triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of him in every place. There is an aroma, he says, that comes forth from us which makes other people aware of something of Christ in us.

It may not be by anything we say, anything we do, it's just an aroma. An aroma has got nothing to do with, it's like using a perfume. A person uses a perfume, he doesn't have to say anything.

It's just something about his bearing, his conduct, the way he, even the very way he talks to you, or his tone of voice, or his approachability. Many things which are unspoken, there's an aroma. And around all of us, there is an aroma, and like body odor, sometimes we don't realize it.

Other people may smell something, like bad breath, and they may be, they may not say anything. In fact, most people won't tell us if we've got bad breath or body odor, and they probably won't even tell us if they see something un-Christlike. How shall we save ourselves from this delusion of a holiness which is an illusion? It's only if we are humble before God, and allow the Holy Spirit to show us day by day.

If we acknowledge that despite all our spiritual growth, despite all our knowledge, and despite all our service for Him, we are not like Him yet. We shall be like Him only when we see Him, and every man who has this hope in Him purifies himself as he is pure. That means he doesn't stop purifying himself until he reaches total Christlikeness.

So, a spiritfull man is a man who's got a passion to be Christlike. Even his service for others comes out of Christlikeness, because Christ serves so perfectly. Whether it's his personal life, to be Christlike does not mean just life, it means witness, it means service, it means helping others.

Jesus spent so much of His time helping others, ignoring His personal needs, and as the Holy Spirit shows us, we see our need. And it says here in verse 15, we are a fragrance of Christ to God, among those who are being saved, among those who are perishing. And that encourages me to not try to be a fragrance to other people.

You know, there are people who try, can hear a message like this, and say, okay, from now on, I want to be a fragrance to other people. And the whole thing can be artificial. No, this is, it says we are a fragrance of Christ to God, first of all.

It's God who's got to smell the fragrance first, and if God smells it, we can be sure other people will smell it. But if we are trying our best to get other people to smell our humility, and our purity, and our unworldliness, and so many things, we're definitely going to end up as Pharisees. See, we have preached holiness in our church for 25 years.

I would say, and this would not be boasting, it's not an exaggeration, because I've traveled all across the country, perhaps more than any other church that I know of, and therefore, I have said to the brothers and sisters in our church, I said, therefore, brothers and sisters, there is more danger of us being greater Pharisees than anyone else in our country. Do you know how the Pharisees became Pharisees? By pursuing holiness. But it was a holiness of the letter.

It was not a holiness which brought a fragrance to God. In the Old Testament, we read this verse in Isaiah, chapter 65. He says in Isaiah 65, verse 5, about certain people who say to others, keep to yourself, don't come near me, for I'm holier than you.

Now, I don't think anyone, I've never heard anybody say that. I don't think anybody says it. Because it's too rude.

It's the impression we give in these verses. I am holier than you. We never say it with our words.

But we can give that impression. And when we give that impression to others, we make other people feel small. That's not the aroma of Christ.

And this is, I tell you, in my pursuit of holiness, this is the thing that I've been scared of more than anything else. Because I know this is the thing that will make me a Pharisee. I'm scared to tell other people anything that the Lord has done for me or in me, which can make them feel small.

We've got to be careful when we report to others what the Lord has done through us. I fear when I speak about such things when I go back to my home church. We need to fear when we speak about dreams and visions and revelations and anything.

Always the question we need to ask ourselves is, am I giving this impression? I'm holier than you. I'm more useful to God than you. I'm more unworldly than you.

It's not the aroma of Christ. See, that's why the sinners ran away from the Pharisees. But Jesus, who was holier than all those Pharisees, they felt so comfortable with him, even though he was holier than the

Pharisees.

Now, logically speaking, a sinner should feel more comfortable with another sinner, not with a holy man. I mean, if my clothes are dirty, I'd feel more comfortable with other people whose clothes are dirty. I'd feel awfully embarrassed if I came before someone whose clothes were sparkling white.

Jesus' clothes were sparkling white. There's not a spot of sin in him. And yet the filthiest sinners in town felt comfortable with him because he never made them feel small.

He never gave them the impression, I'm holier than you. I'm not worldly like you are. God's using me.

I praise God for that. To me, that is one of the greatest marks of holiness. And it says, those who give this impression to others, the Lord says in verse 5, These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.

It's interesting, the expressions the Lord uses. Have you ever been near a smoking fire? Smoke going into your nostrils all the time? Or we have a lot of vehicles, trucks in India on the roads that belch out smoke. There are not many rules on those things over there.

And a bribe to a policeman will take care of any amount of smoke you produce from the truck. And when I travel on my scooter behind that, which doesn't have any windscreen or anything, I like to keep a big distance or get another vehicle between me and that truck. It's terrible.

And it says a fire that burns all day. It's just 24 hours. The Lord says it's like that.

If you want to, if you know, God says, if you want to know what I think of such people who give that impression to others, I'm holier than you. He says, the best example I can use is getting smoke in your nose the whole day. I don't want to go anywhere near that.

So if the Lord feels like that, and I say, Lord, I don't want to be like that. I don't want to be a smoke in your nostrils the whole day. Have I been like that? God sees how we are towards others.

Love never makes another person feel small. We can, in the ministry, I've seen through the years how if your ministry is anointed, effective, powerful, we can get power over people. I can make people do what I want.

I can make people serve me. I'm scared because I serve a Savior who never wanted anybody to serve. He came to serve.

But I know it's so easy when people respect me to have power over them, to make them serve me in some way. And then it's so easy to become big. And I fear, I want to go down, become small, because I'm called to serve.

I remember a great preacher, a well-known preacher in India once came to stay in our home, so many years ago, 20 years ago. He was gripped by the things. We were speaking in our church, in our message, and he came to attend our meetings to hear.

And he saw how my wife and I moved around with the people in our church. And he said, Brother Zak, you shouldn't mingle so closely with people. Keep a little distance.

See, that's the technique of royalty. Keep a little distance. Let them have a little awe of you.

This is not the way you and your wife just mingle so freely with all the ordinary people. Well, I felt sorry for him. That's all I can say.

This is royalty. You know, kings and queens, they never get too close to people. You can never get too close to them.

You have to keep your distance. Film actors and film actresses can't get close to them. Jesus was not like that.

He was with ordinary people all the time. It says in Romans chapter 12, verse 16, in the middle of that verse, Romans 12, 16, Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Associate with the lowly.

That means mingle with very ordinary people as an ordinary man. I love the title that Jesus used of himself. He said, I'm a son of man.

That means a very ordinary man. I'm just an ordinary man. He wasn't.

He was God Almighty. But he lived on earth as an ordinary man. And the more I can be like him, even if I can't preach well, I'll finish my course with joy.

I'll accomplish God's purpose on earth. You don't know how to preach well. That's a gift God gives to some.

But if you can look at Jesus, be gripped by his glory and be an ordinary man, an ordinary woman, not royalty, not a star in the Christian church, an ordinary brother, an ordinary sister, you'll finish your course with joy. You'll be a blessing wherever you go. And even if you speak a few words, God will take them home like an arrow to people's hearts.

They'll never forget you all your life, all their life. You know, you can never forget a real saint. You may argue with him.

You may criticize him. But the memory of that man's life will haunt you wherever you go. Because you saw something in him of Christ.

That's how we are to live. That people who meet with us, they go away and 40 years later, they won't forget you, even if they never see you again. There was something of Jesus that they saw in you which they can never forget.

This is what it means to be witnesses unto me. It's been so degraded, this matter of witness. We've got Bible schools and teaching and knowledge and all these things.

It's good. But if we don't reflect Christ, if the aroma doesn't come forth. You know, you can have a strong personality.

You may not be a preacher like me. You can have a strong personality. Your human soul may have so much power in it.

And that doesn't depend on how big you are or how clever you are. Human soul power is something you can use to bring up all of yourself in people. And if you're that type of strong personality, it's very easy for

you to dominate other people in the church who are weak personalities.

And it can also come if you're a very rich person. You know, you're so rich that a poor person feels so small before you. I want you to see this verse in Luke chapter 22.

Jesus said to his disciples, you know, this was when they had this dispute in verse 24 as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest. And he said to them, the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. And those who have authority over them are called benefactors.

Now what's a benefactor? A benefactor is one who does good to other people. He's a very rich man who helps poor people. And the Lord said, don't be a benefactor.

What does that mean for me? It means that if I help a poor brother, I must do it in such a way that he has no obligation to me, that he doesn't feel small through my helping him, that I don't rob him of his dignity as a human being in my helping him. I need to help him. But if I have helped him and in the process robbed him of his dignity as a human being, I'm a benefactor.

I live in a country which has seen numerous missionaries. I have met many, many missionaries in India in the last 40 years. I don't want to judge them.

But my opinion is that most of them are like benefactors, 90%. I hope I'm wrong. I sincerely hope I'm wrong.

But I fear I'm right. They made a lot of, they did a lot of good. They sacrificed, they gave money, they built hospitals and did this and that and so many things.

But they never made themselves equal to those brothers whom they came to serve. They were benefactors. It's not easy.

I can act equal, I can talk equal, but the aroma gives us away. And the aroma can come, the aroma of humility is different from acts of humility and talking humble and anything. You cannot duplicate the humility of Christ.

You either have it inside or you don't have it. And that depends on what you think of other people. It depends on what you think of yourself in relation to other people.

It depends on whether you believe that all human beings are equal, irrespective of race, religion, color, intelligence. I've had to teach myself that. The most important principle of Christian service is what it says in Hebrews 2.17, that he was made in all things like his brothers.

It says about Ezekiel, I sat where they sat. I sat where they sat. He was made in all things like his brothers.

He was no benefactor. He was an ordinary man. It's very difficult.

It's not easy. Don't assume, my brother and sister, that you're there. If you assume it, you'll deceive yourself.

It's far safer to assume you're not like that. I start from the point of assumption that I am a benefactor. And Lord, I don't want to be one.

Help me to be in all things like my brothers, that the least and the lowest of them will never feel uncomfortable before me. That even when I reach the heights of holiness in my inner life, and the heights of what I think is Christ-likeness, that the filthiest sinner in the world will still feel comfortable around me. That the aroma is of Christ, and not of a self-made holiness.

I believe these are things we need to take seriously if we want to go on with God. We can come up to a certain point in our walk with God, and then spend a lot of time congratulating ourselves. Very often, we can compare ourselves with other believers around us, and when there's so much of decay, and corruption, and Christendom, it's not difficult to be better than other Christians.

And in today's world, it's the easiest thing to be better than other Christians. Because Christendom is sinking in corruption, in worldliness, in the love of money, that there's hardly any distinction between born-again Christians today, and so-called spirit-filled Christians, and the world. How difficult is it to be better than them? Easy.

And then can come a certain pride, our church is better, this is better, that is better, we don't do it like this in our church, we don't do it like this in our home. We're like this, and we're like this, and we dress like this, and we can be like a lot of tin soldiers, looking very neat. And we can put that on our children.

We can make our children like tin soldiers, that sit around the table. And a lot of Christianity today is like, you know, in a shop window, they present something for the passers-by to see. And if one of these tin soldiers don't behave, we get a little disturbed.

Not because the aroma is not going to God, but because those passers-by saw something in one of our tin soldiers. There's so much of honour-seeking, seeking the honour of men, seeking glory from men. I believe that if there's anything we need to fear in the pursuit of holiness and unworldliness, it is seeking the honour of men.

Trying to present a fragrance to men, instead of a fragrance to God. We're not to be benefactors, we're not to make people feel small, in any way. A benefactor is one who does good.

I may be preaching holiness to people and doing good, but I make that fellow feel he's down there, and I'm up here, on this platform. I have to sit where he sits. I have to make him feel, I'm like you, brother.

And I see Jesus was like that, you know. The lepers whom the Pharisees would keep outside the city, he'd go and embrace them, make them feel he's not different. And he healed them.

And these things challenge me. I've said to brothers when in our church, I say, if you see there's a brother in need, in our church, and you want to help him financially, that's a good desire. Says those charged, those who are rich in the world, that they share what they have with others in need.

But there is where we require not only a generous heart, but tremendous wisdom to be a brother and not a benefactor. And I say, don't go and give him that money, because he'll know you gave it. And he'll feel obligated to you.

You robbed him of his dignity, he's poor. But you made him aware that he's poor. Yet you want to help him.

I say, put it in an envelope, write his name, and drop it in the offering box. And he won't know where it came from. And you want to help him next month, use another color envelope, another color pen, disguise your handwriting, change the amount of the money you put inside, drop it in the offering box again.

And make it irregular. Not every month. There are many ways.

Love is inventive. If you want to hide yourself, you'll have to be inventive. I love that verse in Isaiah.

You know, we all want to be like God. And it says in Isaiah, in chapter 45, verse 15, Truly, thou art a God who hides himself. One characteristic of God is that he hides himself.

And the more I become like God, the more I hide myself. The more I want to disappear. And see how perfectly God has done it in this universe.

He's done it so well that there are atheists in the world who say there is no God. How well he's hidden himself. They think he doesn't even exist.

And when he answers prayer, he does it so well that even believers say, oh, that was a coincidence. Oh, it was that medicine. Or it was that hospital.

Or it was that doctor. I praise God for the way he hides himself. Somebody else gets the glory all the time.

Some doctors, some medicine, some this, that or the other. And God's hidden himself. And actually, he did the whole thing.

Do you want to be like him? Jesus would heal the sick. And he would tell people, don't tell anyone I did it. Just go and glorify God.

Don't tell anyone I did it. Don't tell anyone. Do you ever, ever see that spirit in any of today's healing evangelists? I've never seen it.

And that's why I say it's not the spirit of Christ. I don't know what type of magic they do up there, but it's not the spirit of Christ. That I have no doubt at all.

Because God is a God who hides himself. I've seen servants in homes in India. Because people are so poor, they work as servants to earn a living.

Servants who live in homes and bring the food to the table. And a good servant is one who does--sometimes it would be a maid servant--does all her work in the background. We don't have washing machines in 99.9% of the homes in India.

The washing of the clothes a servant does in the background. The cooking of the food is done in the kitchen. The sweeping of the floor is done when nobody's in the room.

But the result of it is seen by others. There's a good meal on the table. Clothes are washed and ironed.

House is clean. But you don't see the person who did it. A visitor to that home will never see the servant.

They'll only see the master and the mistress and the sons and daughters in the house. The servant will never be seen. And I've meditated on this.

I've meditated on servants in our Indian homes to be a better servant of the Lord myself. And I said, Lord, I'll be successful as a servant of the Lord when I can be like that servant. That I can do something and nobody knows who did it.

That I can work behind the scenes. And where does that servant get her reward from, her salary? Not from these visitors. She gets it from her master or mistress.

She's not bothered what the visitors say. She gets her salary. If I'm satisfied with the approval of God, my master, it'll be enough.

Why do I want somebody else on earth to know that I did it? Or that it was I who brought that person to the Lord or something like this. Are you happy for your master to approve of you? I was talking about soul power. Soul power is a tremendous force.

It's being used tremendously by the devil through Christians. Christian preachers. Money power, soul power.

You know, as I said, you can be rich and make other people feel strong. You can be a great intellectual. I deliberately go frequently to the village churches where 75-80% of our churches are in the villages.

Extremely poor people who've never been through one or two classes of school. And to sit with them. I'll sit on the floor there.

Chairs to sit with them. To sit in their small little homes. It not only brings me down to earth physically, it brings me down spiritually too.

I say, that's my salvation. People bless me without their knowing it. Anything that makes us a little lower.

I thought of this aroma, you know, when I was down at this conference last weekend in North Carolina. And I saw a number of retarded children there. Some families.

Well, I believe those retarded children will certainly be in God's kingdom. Those are some people we definitely are sure will be there. We don't know about all the others, but those ones will definitely be there.

So they're members of Christ's body. Redeemed by the blood of the land. The righteousness of Christ imputed to their account.

And I thought, yeah, every member in Christ's body has a function. There's no part of this body which doesn't serve the others. So these retarded members of Christ's body, mentally retarded, intellectually retarded, maybe physically retarded.

If they are members of Christ's body, they must be blessing the body of Christ in some way. They do. How do you feel when you see a retarded child? A little bit of compassion.

You became a little more Christ-like. But did that person know that he blessed you that way? Did that little child with that sickness realize that it had blessed you? No. It's blessedly ignorant.

Or the fact that it blessed you, made a hard person like you a little more compassionate. That's how God does his work in the body so that no man gets the glory. In the final day, no man will be able to boast before God.

We'll see that God used so many people like this, retarded people, sick people, to bless me without their knowing it, to soften the hardness of my heart, make me more Christ-like. And we may discover in that day that some of these weak ones blessed us more than all the mighty sermons we heard from pulpits that explained the various doctrines and so many things. God will never share his glory with another.

No preacher will ever be able to stand up there in the final day and glory that he was the one who blessed so many people. He'd be quite surprised to see whom all God used. It beholds us to be humble, to recognize that we are nothing.

Soul power. Make sure that your wealth does not make other people feel small, that your intellectual ability does not make another person who is not so clever, not so educated feel small. I believe if you are truly Christ-like, we'll make everyone feel equal to us.

I like to be with little children and talk to them at their level, with young people, and to talk to them right at their level, in their language, so that they feel comfortable around me. Children, young people, weak people, to me this is Christ-likeness. This is holiness.

Even if I haven't got victory in some areas, this is Christ-likeness. There's a verse in Job chapter 33 which I'd like to point out to you. It says here in Job 33 and verse 7, Behold, no fear of me should terrify you, nor should my pressure weigh heavily on you.

Job 33 verse 7, No fear of me should terrify you. I have great need of that verse. People are afraid of me because I preach so hard sometimes.

And I say, Lord, help me, that even if I'm like a lion in the pulpit, when I come down I'm like a lamb. No fear of me should terrify anyone from coming near, nor should my pressure weigh heavily on me. Examine yourself, brothers and sisters.

Does your pressure weigh heavily on people? Do you make people feel small? When they look at your life, do they feel discouraged? Say, oh, I can never make it. Or do they feel encouraged? Oh, he seems to be a person with weaknesses like me and struggles like me, but he made it so I can make it too. What do people feel? Do you feel little happy when you feel that other people admire you? I'm scared when people admire because I know then they'll be discouraged.

I'm scared when people admire my family, my children. I know that it discourages me. I say, Lord, I'm not here to be admired.

Even you never said admire me, you said follow me. People like John, sinner like John could lean upon your breast. How free John was.

Do I allow brothers to lean upon my breast? Or am I such a holy man, great preacher? God save me if I'm like that. How is it, brothers and sisters, with you? You keep a respectable distance from people? You think that's holiness? John leaned upon the breast of Jesus. They felt free with him.

I can imagine Jesus playfully tickling some of his disciples. That horrify you? Oh, Jesus wouldn't do that, wouldn't he? Have you got a wrong picture of Jesus? You think he was always serious? I personally think that's not holiness at all. There's a lot of counterfeit holiness in the world.

Some of these holy people I've met, you don't feel comfortable around them. You don't feel free. You can't get near them.

You don't know whether you're saying the right thing or doing the right thing. I say, Lord, I never want to be like that. I don't want anyone to feel that he doesn't know.

He's always saying the right thing, as far as I'm concerned. He's always doing the right thing. He can never do the wrong thing around me.

It's always right. He must be free. There's an Arabian proverb that says, true friendship is such where I can, without any reserve, pour out everything to my brother and he will sift out the wheat from the chaff and keep only the wheat.

Can we speak like that? Or do we have to be very careful? I have to be very careful when I speak to certain people because, I don't know, there may be a little chaff in what I say. And that could cause problems. But if you have a good relationship with your wife, you know how it is.

You can say everything and she understands. That's brotherhood. That's how it should be in the church.

Fellowship. Holiness without fellowship is a counterfeit. Holiness without fellowship is a deception.

True holiness brings deep fellowship. We feel easy. Jesus never tolerated sin.

But sinners felt comfortable around him because they wanted to be free. It's only the hypocrites who were uncomfortable around him. That's how it should be in the church.

Like it says in Isaiah 33, the hypocrites tremble in Zion. Isaiah 33, 14, trembling as grip the hypocrites. That's how it must be in our church.

A hypocrite must not be able to sit comfortably in our church. But repentant sinners, I don't mean people who want to continue in sin, but repentant sinners always felt comfortable around Jesus no matter how deep they had fallen. Does your pressure weigh heavily on some people? Do people feel the pressure? I have met numerous believers like this.

Not just preachers. There's a weight about them. I don't mean physically.

They can be very small. But there's a weight about them which people feel small when as soon as the person comes into the house, meets them, feels small. It's not Christ-likeness.

If you're like that, there's something we have not cleansed ourselves from. It says in 2 Corinthians 7, we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Now it's easier to cleanse the filthiness of the flesh because that's easily observed.

But filthiness of the spirit, it's more subtle. There are many husbands who bear, their pressure is so heavy on their wives. Those poor wives suffer.

It says here, my pressure should not weigh heavily on you. Does your wife feel scared to make a mistake in the home? There are fathers whose pressure weighs so heavily upon their children. Are your children scared to do anything, no mistake at home? Everything must be spot on.

You must be a perfect tin soldier. Yeah, you can keep up the pretense for long, maybe fool people for 50 years, but it's not. There's an aroma.

A spiritual man can see through the whole thing. God can see through the whole thing. Fortunately, 90% of people in the church may not be spiritual, so you can get away with it.

But 90% or perhaps 99% don't see through it. Soul power is so subtle. You can have all your doctrines right, preach so well, do so many things so well, and it's human power makes you great and other people small.

Jesus was not like that. Christlikeness, holiness is Christlikeness. No fear of me should terrify you.

People shouldn't be afraid of you. People shouldn't be afraid of me. They should fear God.

2 Corinthians 7, that same verse I quoted, it says holiness is perfected in the fear of God, not in the fear of men. Nobody should perfect his holiness out of fear of me. You don't have to be afraid of me, brother.

I'm going to stand just like you before the judgment seat of Christ. We need to fear him. No fear of me should terrify you.

If every brother in my church can say about me, I don't fear Brother Zach, I can go and put my arm around him, then I'm Christlike. Maybe young brother, do people live in awe of you, holy man, man of God? There's so much of counterfeit holiness in the world. There's a stench in God's nostrils, there's smoke in his nostrils day and night.

I am holier than you. Words that never come out of our mouth is the aroma. And sometimes when we're like that, it's because we haven't cleansed ourselves, we haven't cleansed the filthiness of spirit.

It's like, you know, if you don't have a bath, you don't have a shower, body odors come out, you don't even, you got so used to it that you don't even know there's body odor coming out. But other people, anywhere you go, they sense it, but they are curses, they won't tell you. You're a blessed man.

If somebody can tell you, perhaps your wife, that you're hard, you're strong, your pressure is so much. I remember hearing of a brother who was so orderly in his thinking. He was a brilliant man, orderly, everything was neat and tidy about his ways.

Everything, his mind was programmed like that. And in God's wonderful wisdom, he got married to a wife who was thoroughly disorderly. That is salvation for both people.

In fact, it's almost certain that such a marriage is ordained by God. Because I tell you, God's more interested in our sanctification than in tidy homes. I hope you know that.

I mean, tidy homes are good, but that's secondary. Sanctification is more important. So this brother, he had such tremendous wisdom.

He would help his wife wash up the dishes in the kitchen, and she would place all the plates and forks and knives and all in such a glass, and a half a sard, not this neat little thing, this cupboard for this and this cupboard. It was just half a sard type of way. And this was so foreign to this brother.

You know, this was not the way. But you know what he'd do? He'd wash the dishes and put it in the same half a sard way, so that his wife would never feel small. Wise man.

They had a happy marriage. Their kitchen was chaos, but they were happy. Which do you want? What do you want? Neat kitchen? Tension? Forget the kitchen, brother.

I want to be happy with my wife. Be wise, brothers and sisters. Don't make such demands on each other, on your children.

You don't realize sometimes how your pressure weighs heavily on your partner, weighs heavily on the brothers around you, the sisters around you. I know you're sincere. We're all sincere.

What we need is more life. God will give it to us if we humbly seek it. It says in 1 Peter 4, verse 17, the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God.

And if it begins with us first, I want to stop there. I have used this verse to share with people in our church. How do we know we are the household of God? We claim to be the household of God compared to all the other dead denominations around us.

I say, here is the mark. Judgment begins in the household of God, and it begins with us first. If we judge ourselves, we are the household of God.

If we spend our time judging everybody else, we're not the household of God. We may be the household of the devil, despite all our preaching. Judgment begins in the household of God.

It begins with us first. You see, Jesus Christ has come to turn the world upside down. In other words, actually right side up, because the world was upside down ever since Adam sinned, and Jesus just came and straightened man.

But since all men are upside down, they say these fellows have turned the world upside down. You know that verse in Acts 17. They thought the world was upside down when Paul preached.

He was turning the world upside down. Actually, he was just turning the world right side up, but there were so few of them in the midst of a whole world upside down. But what does this mean in terms here? Just look at it like this.

The race of Adam has got one characteristic among many others. They put themselves first. Every child of Adam puts himself first in everything except judgment.

In judgment, it's always the others first. Right? Always the others first. I mean, Adam, as soon as God asked him, he had his finger pointing at Eve, this woman whom you gave me.

I pointed at God too. That's how it is. It's characteristic of the race of Adam.

Everything else, how will this bless me? What can I get out of this? How will this make me appear nice in the eyes of other people? And will this enhance my reputation and my image? But in judgment, not me first, other people. Everybody around. And I don't even come last.

I don't even figure in it. And now Jesus has come to turn this upside down world right side up and says, now one proof of that will be that you put others first in everything except judgment. In judgment, what do

you do? You put yourself first.

That's what it says here. It begins with us first. You know, this is the only thing about which the Bible says we must put ourselves first.

There's no reason. We put ourselves first. Do you? Do you want to build a household of God? The household of God is a bunch of insignificant men and women who decided to judge themselves first.

That's it. Who decided to cleanse themselves. Who consider the possibility of being very real that their holiness may be a holiness which is an illusion.

A holiness which makes other people feel small. A holiness that terrifies other people. A holiness that weighs heavily on others.

Jesus said, my yoke is easy. I always feel it was so comfortable to be with Jesus. He never made you feel small.

He never made you feel unimportant. He never made you feel that he was so busy, he had no time for you. I love to read that Nicodemus went to see Jesus when he was at night and Jesus had time for him.

That means he gave people the impression. Sure, you can come and see me. Nicodemus just walked in without making an appointment.

He just walked in. I said, Lord, I want to be like you. I'm not such a great man that people have to make an appointment to come and see me.

Who am I? I'm nothing. I'm a nobody. I want to be a nobody all my life.

You were a nobody. He made himself of no reputation. He made himself a nobody.

We are not. We're somebodies. We don't want other people to disturb our convenience.

It says about Jesus once in Mark, chapter two, that Mark's gospel. I think it's chapter two. Just a moment.

Let me just find this verse. Yeah, somewhere here in chapter two or three where it says they were so busy serving people that he didn't have time to eat. And they got a hold of him and said that they thought he was a fanatic.

I think it's in chapter three. Yeah, verse 20. He came home and the multitude gathered again, Mark 3, 20, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.

He couldn't even eat a meal. He was like that. People came, wanted to talk to him, wanted to meet him.

Somebody wanted prayer for healing. Somebody wanted this. It wasn't just one meal.

This happened so often, I think, that when his own people, his relatives heard of this, they went out, verse 21, to take custody of him for they were saying he has lost his senses. Now, nobody would ever say that if he just missed one meal. But this is becoming a habit.

He's gone off his mind. He's crazy. Has anybody ever said about you that you were insane to allow people to take so much of your time that you don't even have time to eat? How many of you are serious about

wanting to be like Jesus? There's a price to be paid.

If you don't want to be inconvenienced, you don't want to be disturbed by others, you want to be like Jesus, I say, brother, forget it. Forget it. You can have your little holiness or whatever.

The aroma will not be Christ-like. The fragrance to God will be a smoke in his nostrils. People were so important for him.

He wasn't here with an agenda. He loved people. He wasn't doing a ministry.

This ministry, oh, what a lot goes under the name of ministry. He loved people. Jesus loved people.

He came for people. He came for sinners. He came to serve sinners.

And sinners had a right to make demands on his time, on his life, on his convenience, intrude into his eating times, so that he didn't have time for meal, because after that somebody else came for healing or something like that. And his relatives said, this is crazy. Yeah, he was different.

He wasn't like the run-of-the-mill preachers that they had seen so far. He was just being disturbed all the time. And he was so sensitive to people's needs.

It says once that Jesus and his disciples in John chapter 4 went through the city of Samaria. And he came, John 4, 5, to the city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. And Jacob as well was there.

And Jesus was weary from his journey, but not so weary that he could not listen to the Holy Spirit. He was weary, but weary or not, he was always alert to the voice of the Holy Spirit. And they were all, there were all 13 of them, Jesus and his 12 disciples, and they were all hungry.

And I know I've traveled with different brothers to different places, and I know what we do when we are all hungry. We all go to a restaurant and eat. I never sit by the wayside and send the other 12 to the restaurant and bring me some food.

I've never done it once in my life. Wasn't that unusual that he would do it? Would you do it? There was only one reason he did it. He sensed in his spirit, let them go, you stay here.

So he sent them into town, and he stayed where they were. His disciples went into the city to buy food, and he stayed there. And sure enough, the Holy Spirit had a reason.

There came along this woman at just around noontime. Normally in the villages, people go to draw water from the wells in the morning, because they need it for the whole day. But this woman wouldn't go in the morning, because she was the laughing stock and the one who was derided by everybody in the town.

She was an immoral woman. Holy people wouldn't go near her. She had five husbands.

I don't know how many times she was divorced. You don't like to go near some divorced person, right? Whose woman has been divorced five times, and now living with somebody else, not even legally married. Keep clear.

Holy people would keep clear. So she recognized that. So she would come at a time when nobody would come to draw water.

Jesus was there waiting for her. I say, Lord, make me sensitive to your voice, the voice of the Spirit like that. Don't let me waste my days on earth.

It's not only the great preachers who stand before crowds who bless people. The ones who listen to the still small voice of the Spirit walking down life's pathway. Some place the Spirit says, don't.

Be alert to minister to needy people. That five times divorced person sitting there. Don't go with your doctrine on divorce and remarriage to them first.

Let's start with a glass of water. With love, compassion, not with doctrine. And the Samaritan woman is amazed.

She says, how is it you being a Jew? Aren't you one of these holy people, Jew? You ask a drink from me? You know, we have the caste system in India where the higher caste will not touch the hand or a glass that a lower caste person holds. It's dirty. This is how it was, the Jews and Samaritans.

Jews were high caste. They were holy people. I'm holier than you.

Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. We have no dealings with certain classes of people. No, let these divorcees go to hell.

We're not bothered. We have no dealings with them. We are holy.

But Jesus cares for them. He died for them too. He wants to save them.

And he begins to talk to her and he says he probes her only to find out honesty. Go and call your husband, he says in verse 16. The woman answered, I have no husband.

She thought she would get away with that. Jesus said, you said well, because you've had five husbands, verse 18, and the one whom you now have is not your husband. You've been divorced five times and now you're living with a sixth one.

It's not even properly married. That's right. You don't have a husband now.

And she, this is the part I like, she changes the subject. She says, Lord, can you tell me something about worship? You know, I've been wanting to know about worship. You know, verse 20, our fathers worshipped in this mountain and your people say you must worship in Jerusalem.

What is the right way of worship? And Jesus doesn't say like a modern preacher would do, hey, hang on, let's get back to this point. We're talking now about your husband. None of this worship business.

He changes the subject. I love that. He did not make her feel small.

He said, okay, I'll tell you about worship. And he never came back to that subject again. He just left it.

He said, now it's coming. When the true worshippers, the most profound statement on worship in the entire ministry of Jesus was spoken to this five times divorced woman. The last person on earth we would think of making profound doctrinal statements.

Jesus was so different from us. He wasn't like us at all. We are fallen people, the race of Adam.

I need the Holy Spirit to show me the glory of Jesus before he can make me like him. And she got convicted. She got converted and she became a witness.

And the whole, there was a revival in this city. And I think at that point if Jesus had probed more instead of letting it go, she would have just felt so uncomfortable and squirmed inside and just gone away. That's how sinners go away from us.

They're holier than them. It's not the aroma of Christ. I see, Lord, I have a long way to go.

When I read the Gospels, I used to read them like stories once upon a time. But now I see the glory of Jesus in the scriptures as the Holy Spirit wants to show me so that I can be like him. So that I can be sensitive, thoughtful.

This other passage that we looked at earlier, Luke chapter 22, verse 24. We saw that earlier. There arose a dispute among them as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest.

And he knew what they were talking about. And I see his gentleness with his disciples. Here are these fellows who are arguing who's the greatest.

And instead of telling them, I'm sick and tired of you fellows. Three and a half years I've tried to talk to you chaps about humility. And now I'm going to be crucified tomorrow morning and you're talking about who's going to be the greatest.

He doesn't say that. He says, shouldn't be like that. Shouldn't be like that among you.

So gently. And he says to them, verse 28, you are those who have stood by me in my trials. To whom does he say that? He knows that in a few hours they're all going to run away.

Leave him alone. What does he say? You are those who stood by me in my trials. He had a message of hope.

I believe that's what we need brothers and sisters in the church. People come to the meetings in the church beaten in life's battles at home. Difficulties at home.

Financial difficulties. Difficult husbands, difficult wives, children who are rebellious. Difficulties in their place of work, struggling to make ends meet.

Sometimes they come to our place into the church to get a word of encouragement. What do they get? Do they get a hammering? God have mercy on us. You are those who stood with me in my trials.

Didn't he know that they'd all be running away in a few hours? He knew it very well. But he would encourage them. And he says, I've appointed a kingdom for you and you're going to sit with me one day in my throne.

Jesus was a great encourager. He was not afraid of praising people publicly. He didn't say, oh if I praise them their heads will get swollen up and we better not do that.

Keep them humble by criticizing them. No. It says about this centurion in Matthew chapter 8, who came to him and asked, saying, my servant is at home paralyzed, suffering great pain.

And Jesus said, I'll come and heal him. Matthew 8 verse 8. And he said, Lord, I'm not qualified that you should come under my roof. But right here, standing here and speak the word, my servant will be healed because I too am a man under authority.

Matthew 8 verse 9. I say to this servant, go. And he goes. I say to that one, come.

And he comes. And I say to my slave, do this and do this. And Lord, he does it.

Lord, I believe you're under the authority. Father, you speak to a sickness, go. That sickness will go.

I believe it. And when Jesus heard this, he marveled. Isn't that amazing? Jesus marveled.

And he said publicly. And this man was listening. He was right there.

And Jesus was not bothered whether his head would get swollen with pride. He wanted to encourage him. This Roman centurion.

Because the Jews looked at him as, hey, you're Roman. We're holier than you. Jesus had a care for these poor divorced women and prostitutes like Mary Magdalene and Roman centurions.

All the people whom others would say, you're not holy. You can't come and sit in our synagogue. Jesus went out for them.

And he said, I have never found such great faith in anyone in Israel as this man. Can you imagine how that man felt when he heard that? From the one whom he respected as the greatest man of God on earth, saying, I have never found such great faith in anyone. Boy, he must have been so encouraged that I believe he would have been a disciple and he would have lived for the Lord.

One word of encouragement. Sometimes we are so reluctant to give it. We don't give it to our children.

We don't give it to our wives who are slogging, slogging, slogging, slogging. Quick to point out if there's something they've done wrong or something not in place or some meal not cooked properly. Are we like Christ? What's the aroma coming out from you, brother, sister? Does it take much to say a word of encouragement to our wives or to our children? How much does it take? What does it cost? Nothing.

To our brother, I'll never forget when I was a very young man. You know how we are when we are young, want to serve the Lord, insecure, trying to impress people. That's how we are.

I understand it because I've been like that myself. Insecure, trying to serve the Lord, wanting to impress. And a much, much older brother put his arms around me once and said, brother, God's got a great purpose for you.

I haven't forgotten it today after 30 years. I didn't get puffed up. I hope not.

I got encouraged. There's enough in the world to discourage people. Brother, you don't have to help them in that area.

We've got to sit on the other end of the seesaw, balance it out a bit. That's why people come to church. We encourage.

This verse in Hebrews chapter 3. You know, I've read it in two translations. Hebrews 3 verse 13. In the King James Version, it says, Exhort one another daily, as long as it is called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3.13. And here in this New American Standard Bible I use, it says, Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today. Exhort. Encourage.

I've looked up the Greek and I see that it can mean both. Encourage. It's from the word, from which you get the word comforter.

Paraclete. Encourage. And I presume that exhort is possibly also, I'm not a Greek scholar, but the people who translated it must have found that to be a legitimate meaning.

And I can say, well, how do I understand that verse? Exhort people so that they are saved from the deceitfulness of sin. Yeah, that's easy to understand. But encourage that person so that he doesn't get hardened by the deceitfulness of sin? Have you ever thought of that? That I can save a person from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin? I've exhorted him enough.

Now I'm going to save him from being hardened by encouragement. Encourage one another day after day. I have, I feel that I spent so many years exhorting that I need to now balance it out for the rest of my life by encouraging.

And I feel perhaps some of you may be in the same boat. You have exhorted people so much. Now let's balance the other side by encouraging them so that they don't get hardened.

Some of our children, some of our young people need a little encouragement so they don't get hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Okay, they slipped up. But didn't you slip up when you were that age? Have you forgotten what you were at that age? How do you look down your nose upon them? Let's be honest.

Brothers and sisters, Christ is coming soon. Paul said to, in Colossians in chapter four, I'll close with this. Colossians four, he said in verse seventeen, say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it.

And I say to you in the name of Jesus Christ, put your name there instead of Archippus. Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord. It's not preaching up here.

It's just being a word of encouragement to somebody that you fulfill it. May the Lord help us. Shall we pray? The aroma of Christ.

Oh, what a need we have. Lord, help us. We bow before you as a needy people in tremendous need.

Help us to be encouragers of others along life's way, to lead them to that holiness which is no illusion. Grant that the aroma of Christ will be a sweet fragrance of Christ to you, O God, our Father. That you see it and you rejoice as we are transformed by your spirit.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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