

Don't Imagine That You Are Spiritual

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of self-reflection and humility in the Christian walk, highlighting the need to judge ourselves rightly, purify ourselves as Christ is pure, and seek to be like Jesus in all aspects of our lives. It addresses the dangers of pride, selfishness, unforgiveness, and the importance of living at peace with others, showing hospitality, and never seeking revenge. The message encourages a deep examination of our hearts and actions to align with the example of Christ's humility and love.

Scripture: Romans 12:3, 1 John 3:3, 1 Corinthians 11:31, Romans 12:10, Romans 12:17, Romans 12:18, Romans 12:19, Malachi 4:6

Topics: "Self-Reflection", "Humility in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

What do you feel is the greatest disadvantage that you have in NCCF, as a member of NCCF, or living in the United States? When I compare that with life in the first two, three centuries for Christians, they had the advantage of persecution. And persecution has a tremendous way of driving us closer to God and closer to one another. They would say about those early Christians, behold how these Christians love one another.

See, persecution has that, accomplishes that. A bunch of persecuted people, they love one another, they cling to one another, they don't, they overlook the little problems we have with each other. And they are driven closer to God as well.

So now we cannot create persecution, but we have to recognize that we got a handicap. We don't have what those early Christians had, which is a blessing to them. So we have to be more careful that we seek to make up for that in other ways, and live close to God and fight with those things that we see clearly are hindering us from going closer to the Lord, and to have an honest evaluation of ourselves.

It's very, very important. See, the Bible gives us warnings like this. Let me show you a couple of them.

In Romans 12, in verse three, through the grace Paul says, through the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, every single one among you, without exception, don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Let's just stop there for a moment. You know what psychology teaches? Psychology teaches don't have a low estimate of yourself.

If you have a low estimate of yourself, you won't be able to accomplish something in life. But I never see such an exhortation anywhere in scripture. Don't have a low estimate of yourself.

As I've often said, psychology, music, and money have substituted the Holy Spirit, have become the substitutes for the Holy Spirit in Christendom. I spoke a message on that, money, music, and psychology, driving people away from God. You can listen to it sometime on YouTube.

And this is one of the things that psychology teaches. Don't have a low estimate of yourself. Be confident and be, recognize who you are, and then you will accomplish something in the world.

The interesting thing is in the entire New Testament, as far as I know in the entire Bible, there's no such exhortation saying don't have a low estimate of yourself. But there is an exhortation which says don't have a high estimate of yourself. Why is that? Because the Holy Spirit knows that nobody has a low estimate of themselves.

They may have in relation to what psychology teaches, but Christians, most Christians have a pretty high estimate of themselves because they compare themselves with somebody else and they say, I'm better than that person. Anyway, what about other Christians? I think that is one of the great dangers of Christians that have understood a lot of truth and have a fairly upright life and are in a good church. These are all handicaps if we don't battle them.

One, you have a fairly good life, good knowledge of the truth doctrine, and you're in a good church. Well, then don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. See, what is the problem with the Pharisee? He compared himself with the publican and said, well, I thank God I'm not like that.

And that is one of the greatest tendencies, that's one of the greatest dangers rather, that we can face when our standard of life is better than that of others, in other churches or even in our own church. And when the quality of our family life is much better than others, when we have brought up our children well, compared to a lot of other people, you may look around at others and their children are wayward or look around at others in your own church and see that you're not as disciplined and humble and good as yours are. These are all dangers.

We think of them as great benefits. Yes, it's good to have a situation like that, but also see them as dangers because all these things can tend to make us think more highly of ourselves. I mean, even if you have a good job and God has blessed you.

I mean, many of you are immigrants from India and other places and you look at your fellow countrymen and you're far better off than financially and thoughts can come into your own mind that you are a little better. I just want to say there's a great danger there. We're safer when we are struggling than when we are at ease and everything is easy.

So it says here, instead of beware of thinking of more highly than you ought to think, but think so has to have a sound assessment of yourself, a healthy assessment of yourself. Like people go for regular checkups once a year. The more older they get, they go to checkup.

So many things we're so careful with our physical body to make sure that our blood pressure is normal and that we have blood sugar is all in normal levels, but much more spiritually. Recognize how much God has allotted to you. And then he gives us a whole lot of things to check our life on in the remaining verses.

But before that, I want you to turn to Galatians chapter six and see something similar there. In Galatians six, it says in verse three, Galatians six, verse three, if anyone thinks he's something or a somebody, when he's actually a nobody, he deceives himself. Anybody thinks he's something when he's nothing, he deceives himself.

So when you read a word like that, how do you react? You say, of course, that doesn't apply to me. Really? Be honest. Do you really feel you're a nobody? Do you really feel you are a nobody in the church? That your evaluation of yourself is zero? Because that's what it says here.

He thinks he's something when he's actually a zero. He deceives himself. There is deception that comes from the devil, deception that comes from the world.

But the most dangerous is when we deceive ourselves because we can stand against these other deceptions. We're so careful to avoid false doctrine. There are so many doctrines going around in the world today and we can be very, very careful to avoid all that and never be deceived in our doctrine.

In fact, we can glory even in that, that our doctrines are so accurate and good and we've got all of the new covenant and we can explain the new covenant better than everybody else. And yet with all of that, I've seen people, because I've seen people who understood the new covenant intellectually for the last 40 years, and I've seen that many of them have moved around a number of churches in India, people who can explain the new covenant so clearly, but they have deceived themselves about their own spiritual level. So how shall we evaluate ourselves? Philippians in chapter two, this is the way to evaluate ourselves.

There are two problems which are our main problems in life, as two things in our flesh that are the strongest forces in our flesh. It's good to identify them, our greatest enemies. Philippians chapter two and verse three, selfishness and pride.

And both of them are like onions. You peel off a layer and you think you've died to yourself, you haven't. A million other layers underneath that, unlike any onion that you see.

Pride, you humble yourself in a situation and you think you're a pretty humble brother or sister. Well, you've just taken off one layer. And if you're not getting light on the next layer, you're not going to progress.

You'll be stuck there. Oh yeah, you'll be better than some of those other Pharisees and other denominations, but you'll be just a not so bad a Pharisee, that's all. What is your goal? Is this your goal? Do nothing.

Zero from selfishness. Do zero from pride. In other words, there must not be an atom of pride in you or an atom of selfishness.

And it gives us some positive steps to help us get there so that we don't deceive ourselves. With humility of mind, please remember this, every word is important here, brothers and sisters. Humility is not on the outside.

It's not the way we dress or the way we put our head down or the way we defer to others or the way we speak or any of these things, or the way you demean yourself by saying low things about yourself or no, no, no, no, no. Humility is in your mind. Philippians 2, 3. If it's not there, you don't have it.

Please remember this all your life. Any humility which you have, which is not in your mind is useless. You get honor from others for your humility.

You might as well throw it in the trash can. It's worth nothing before God. With humility of mind, and if you have humility of mind here, it says here, you will regard one another as more important than yourself.

Not more spiritual than yourself. No. The Bible doesn't ask us to have unrealistic standards.

Some people sometimes teach something like that. Yeah, I esteem that person as more spiritual than you. Garbage.

I follow Jesus, who never esteemed anybody in the world as more spiritual than himself. There was not a single human being that Jesus looked at and said, oh, that person's more spiritual than me. No.

He could say, he could really know I am more spiritual than all these people. Would he be proud? No. He was the humblest man that walked on the earth.

So it is not thinking that other people are more spiritual. That is artificial. But considering them as more important.

That's why it says here, regard one another as more important than yourself. And that's a good test for us to have, to take. As you look around at other people, you know, thank God we are in little communities called local churches.

We don't have to compare ourselves with the whole world. But you can compare yourself with a few people in your local church and ask yourself in the mind, in your mind, not in your actions. In actions, we can all be experts at acting humble and doing humble things and it's all for honor.

But in your mind, that you really esteem everyone as more important than yourself. And if you don't see that, well, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, as it says later on in verse 12 and 13. Work out your salvation, verse 12, last part, same chapter.

If you don't see that, then work out your salvation with fear and trembling so that you do come to the place where you esteem every other person as more important than yourself. I mean, that's a goal that I must always have before me. Is there a single person in the church who I think is less important than me? I'm more important than him.

It's very subtle. I think when we come in the beginning, I think the day you joined the church, you were a new believer. Think of the day you joined NCCF as a new believer.

Boy, you really didn't have very high thoughts about yourself then. Maybe some people came in with high thoughts even then. I've seen some people who come into the church thinking they're experts and they think they know so much and they expect to have an important position straight away from day one, but those are exceptions.

Those are people who are so arrogant in their lives that they don't even get any light on themselves. But many others come into the church with a fairly low estimate. I'm a newcomer here and I think that these people are spiritually minded.

If you came in like that, you're a blessed person. But what happens over a period of time is you don't hold that view of yourself anymore and you begin to think you're more important. I've seen that in a number of people.

I've seen that in a number of Indians who come to the US and when they go back to India to their local church, they're not the same humble people they were when they left. They are American returned, important people, or if they had a good position or studied in some good college compared to that poor brother in India who did not have the opportunity to go to that college. That brother in India may be 10 times more spiritual than this American returned fellow, but that American returned fellow doesn't see it.

I've seen that in so many cases, not just America, people who go to Europe and come back or different places where the standard of living is higher, Australia or any of these places, they come back with a certain high thoughts. And so it's very easy for us to regard ourselves as more important than others. That's where we can deceive ourselves.

We got to go back to that exhortation. Let me go back to what Paul said. I say it through the grace given to me in Romans 12.

I like the way Paul puts it. Then let's turn back for a moment to Romans 12, verse three. See, Paul could have written it like this.

Paul could have said, hey, fellas, don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Yeah, it's the same exhortation. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

But Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit. He's such a humble person because he has this constant thorn in the flesh that he prays and prays and never gets healed from. I think there was some, it was passing the ice.

That's my theory from Galatians four. And he, every time he wrote something, there was this bus in his eyes and boy, he was kept humble all the time. He had a thorn in the flesh that bothered him so much that he prayed that God would take it away.

God didn't take it away. My dear brothers and sisters, the great apostle Paul who saw Jesus face to face needed a thorn to keep him humble. Where are we? That man was so close to the Lord, yet even he needed a thorn to keep him humble because he had accomplished something.

And many of you have accomplished something in the Christian life. Maybe you share well on Sundays. Yeah.

And people appreciate what you share. Maybe you share only two minutes. People appreciate that.

They nod their heads in awe. You're important. It doesn't take much to make you feel you're important.

But see how Paul says, he says, I don't say it like this. Don't think no highly of yourselves. He says, there's a certain grace given to me.

I see a humility there when he says, through the grace given to me, my dear brothers, I'm saying this, not because I'm rebuking you, but through the grace given to me, I say to you, do you see a humility there in the way he expresses it even? A humility that we are strangers to perhaps through the grace given to me. I say to you, don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but have a sober judgment as God has allotted to you the measure of faith. The measure of faith is the measure of our life because the righteous live by faith.

So the more faith means our life is at a higher level spiritually. So that's the meaning here that as God has allotted to each person, a measure of faith, which is relating to gifts, but also in relation to our life. So coming back to Philippians 2, it says there, do nothing from selfishness or pride, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourself.

And that's something we have to work on. Say, Lord, I want to evaluate myself in relation to A, B, C, all the way to Z, everyone in the church. Do I really evaluate? Do I really consider everyone as more important than myself? You may be the most spiritual person in the church.

Jesus was in the midst of his disciples. But in the last supper, by washing their feet, doing the lowly job, he showed that he considered them as all more important. And he even said that, he said, you are all at the table and I'm here as a servant to serve you.

He said that also at the last supper. And there's not just humble words, it was his attitude. It was his whole attitude of mind.

When they urged him to be a king, after he had fed the 5,000 in John chapter 6, it says he ran away into the mountains. He didn't want it. He didn't take a, say it very humbly.

Oh, well, I don't really deserve to be king. So please don't force me. And please let me be my, no, he just went away because he knew one thing.

And that's written here in Philippians 2, when he emptied himself, verse 7, he took the form of a servant. And I read it like this in Philippians 2, 7, he did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, verse 6, but emptied himself and took the form of a slave because he was made in the likeness of men. That's the meaning of this.

If you really read that, because he was made in the likeness of men, he had to be a slave. So he understood one thing, that if I become a human being, I got to be a slave. I got to be a slave of others.

That means serve them, not be dictated to in my life by them, but to have a spirit of service towards all others because God made me a man. God made me a human being means I have to have a spirit of service to other people. That's the meaning I see of verse 7, that he, because he was made in the likeness of men, he became a servant of others.

Now we are also human beings. And I don't know whether you realize that if I'm a human being, I'm supposed to be a servant of other human beings. If I'm a member of this church, I'm supposed to be a servant of others in the church, not get everybody else to serve me.

Oh, you've seen plenty of that. Even in good churches, brothers who come and join good churches and they're looking for everybody to serve them. They themselves serve nobody.

They haven't understood the ABC of the new covenant. They got the theory, but they have not understood the ABC of the new covenant in their life, that if I'm a man, I'm called to be a servant of others. And so it says here, this is the attitude, verse 5, that we must have, which is in Christ Jesus.

And it's in that connection, it says here that how Jesus, when he became a man, became a servant of others. And I skipped over verse 4. Let me read that as well. Don't merely look out on your personal interests.

There's also the interest in the two things I said, which are the biggest problems in our flesh or the greatest evils in our flesh. And it's not lusting after women. It's not love of money.

All those things are there. And these are little fruit. But if you don't go to the root of it, you don't hit at the root of these things, this fruit will come out in different forms.

And this is twofold root that the Holy Spirit exposes in verse 3, selfishness and pride in the mind. And he deals with both of them. He says, don't look out on your personal interests for the interest of others, verse 4. Don't live a self-centered, selfish life.

And look at the example of humility in Jesus and pursue that. So when the Bible says that we got to purify ourselves as Christ is pure, if we want to be ready for Christ's coming, these are the two areas that we need to constantly work on. And Lord showed me that many, many years ago, and I've sought to work on it honestly before God, because I've seen every time I peel off one layer of this honey and I find another.

So I know there's lots more, both in the area of pride and in the area of selfishness. So you can think of love of money as something that hinders us from loving God. But I don't know whether we realize how much of love of money is within us.

And that's a question of how much money you earn or how much you have, but how much we love. That doesn't depend on your bank account. It doesn't depend on your salary because certainly I've seen in India, the poorest people love money.

I've never seen a beggar in India who doesn't love money. A beggar in India loves money just as much as the billionaire loves money. So it's not got to do with your bank account or your income.

The one who's getting zero in the world is getting billions of both love money. So how shall I be free from it? I shall be free from it if I seek to follow Jesus and say, Lord, I want to pull out every layer of a selfish way of life or a proud attitude towards anyone. I don't want to ever think of myself as more important than others or think only of my personal interests all the time.

That's the other thing he says there. He deals with these two things. Don't just seek for your personal interests, verse four, but think of the interests of others.

Now turning to 1 John 3, this is how we are going to be ready for the coming of Christ. The entire Christian world talks about we want to be Christ is coming and we want to be ready and they look at all the pandemic and the plague and all those things. These are all signs of Christ coming and wars and rumors of wars and Christ is coming.

That's fine, but how shall we be ready for it? That's written clearly in 1 John 3. If your hope is right, and I've often emphasized this because I hardly find anyone preaching that this is our hope. You go and ask any

Christian preacher, what is the blessed hope of the Christian? If you doubt me, go and ask any preacher, anyone who's not heard me. What is the blessed hope? They'll all say it's the second coming of Christ.

I say, no, that's only part of it because here it says, verse three of 1 John 3, everyone who has this hope, well, you can't be wrong if you're scripturally, if you base your hope on scripture, what scripture says should be your hope. Everyone who has this hope, what is this blessed hope? That is the previous sentence actually. We know that when he appears, we shall see him.

No, that is second. Yeah, we shall see him as he is. That's number two.

What's number one? What is blessed hope number one? When he appears, we shall be like him. Two, because we will see him as he is. In other words, the hope is not just that I will see him.

The hope is I'll be like him because I see him. It's not really two separate hopes. It's one single hope, but the hope is not that I shall see him face to face and all my sicknesses will go and I'll dwell in mansions.

That's a lot of rubbish. This is the hope. When I see him, I shall be like him.

I want to ask you, is that what you're looking forward to? Most Christians are looking forward to see Jesus in the clouds. We'll be taken up, but that's not the hope in scripture. The hope in scripture is that I shall be like him when I see him, because I see him as he is.

So we got to correct our way of thinking and all these things. And if that is our hope, once we get our hope right, that I'm going to be like him when I see him, how do I know whether I really have this hope? I mean, theoretically, I got the right answer now. Now, tomorrow onwards, anybody asks you, brother, what is your hope? You'll get the right answer because you heard it today.

That I shall be like him when I see him. And scripture says, no, that's not the proof that you've understood it. That is not the proof that you understood it.

You understood the answer in your mind, but that's not the proof that you're gripped by it in your heart. Here is how you know that you're gripped by it in your heart and that it's not just an answer that your clever mind has understood now that you give the right answer in future to anybody who asks you. It is in verse three, you will every day, every day, you'll be purifying yourself until you reach his standard of purity.

Why do I say every day? Because we don't have much time. You can't afford to lose one day. Every day is important because if you realize that you've got a long way to go to become like Christ, I see it even today in my life, as I've sought to walk this way for many years, I still see, oh Lord, I've got a long way to go to become like you.

So I cannot afford to one single day. Now think of some job where if you waste one day, you're lost so much. I've heard of people who came to California way years ago in the 19th century or something to look for gold in the rivers here.

They traveled here taking great risks and struggling and they would not waste one day. They'd go into the water and take their pans and pan for gold, little bits they would collect, collect, collect, and some of them became rich. So I heard they wouldn't waste a day because it is important for them to become rich.

And a person who believes that this is the greatest wealth he can ever acquire, the greatest wealth he can acquire is to become totally like Christ. He's not going to waste a day. He will not waste a moment.

If he has not forgiven somebody, he'll forgive immediately because he wants to be like Christ. To do that, when God reminds you that you haven't forgiven somebody, you seek to forgive him immediately. And if the thought comes back to your mind immediately, you say, no, I've forgiven him.

And you fight that battle and keep that attitude of total forgiveness towards every single person who's harmed you, has to be like Christ because that's how Jesus was. That's how God is. I often thought if you were to go up to heaven and see what God is doing all the time, what do you think God's doing all the time? Well, here's one thing he's doing all the time.

And that is, of course, God can do many things all the time, but here's one of those things. I think all over the world, there's so many Christians who are saying, please forgive me, Father. Please forgive me, forgive me.

And God's saying, forgiven, forgiven. By the time somebody else is there, he's saying, forgive me, forgiven. And within the next second, someone else over there on the other side of the world is saying, forgive me, forgiven.

I get a picture of God constantly saying 24 hours a day, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven. And I say, Lord, I want to be like you. I want to be like you.

Always ready, not a single moment when I'm not willing to forgive others whatever they may have done. And even if they don't ask for it, because that's what Jesus did on the cross. Nobody asked him.

He forgave them. That was not the first example. You read an earlier example in Matthew chapter 12, where they called him Beelzebub, prince of devils in Matthew 12, 24.

What a terrible thing to call the son of God, the prince of devils. And these were Bible scholars, the Pharisees, so blind. And what did Jesus do? They didn't ask for forgiveness.

Oh no. He said, you're forgiven. Verse 32.

I love that verse in Matthew 12, 32. That was his response to they're calling him Beelzebub. Have you spoken a word against the son of man? It is forgiven.

And it's more than that. If you read Matthew 12, 32, it's going into the future, which includes the cross where he was crucified and beyond even till today, 2000 years. Whoever, not only you folks who call me Beelzebub now, whoever in the whole world, ever, ever in the next 2000 years speaks a word against me, it shall be forgiven.

I learned something from that, that I must have an attitude of forgiveness before the guy has committed, done something against me. That's how Jesus, he was talking about the future. In future, Matthew 12, 32, whoever speaks a word against the son of man, it shall be, it's not right now, hasn't happened yet, but when he does, maybe a thousand years from now, somebody's going to speak against me.

Jesus said, it's forgiven already. I learned something from that for myself about what it means to be like Christ. That means as soon as I hear, I mean, I can, Jesus, God can deal with people even before he sees it happen.

I can only deal with it when I hear about it or I know something. I know I hear somebody there. Somebody tells me, said or did something against me, forgiven.

My attitude immediately is, I don't know exactly what he said. I don't want to know the details. It's forgiven.

That is to be like Christ. That is to peel off this layer of selfishness and pride, which makes me feel so important that how dare he speak against me, such a holy man. How dare he speak against this holy man? No, forgiven.

I don't think of myself as somebody. I'm a nobody. Nobody's can forgive others easily.

It's only somebody who cannot forgive others. I want to tell you that if there is someone you cannot forgive, I want to tell you in Jesus name, whoever you are, you think you're a somebody. If you can't forgive your husband or wife for the way they behave and continue to behave towards you, boy, you really think you're somebody.

Jesus could forgive. You see, they didn't ask for forgiveness. Well, they never asked Jesus forgiveness.

Okay. That is to purify ourselves up to his standard of purity. And that's talking about one area.

And if you're really serious, I mean, these are things which I didn't read anywhere. I never heard any message on it, but I'll tell you how I got light on it. I had this passion once I understood this truth, that the new covenant is not just a theory saying that was that day of forgiveness.

Now it is victory. And those days, the Holy Spirit is upon now the Holy Spirit is in all these things, six, seven points of the difference between new covenant, old covenant. You can know all of that and live a thoroughly defeated life, a proud life where you love money and love yourself in spite of all the explanations that you can explain.

No. When I saw that I want to be like Jesus, because that is what he came to earth for. When it says you should call his name, Jesus, or he shall save his people from their sins.

I see it is the sins of selfishness and pride, which I've inherited from Adam. And Jesus came to save me 100%, just like you know that Jesus came to save you 100% from pornography. Think of selfishness like pornography.

How much do you want to be saved from pornography? 90%. That means once in 10 days, you have a look at pornography. You'll save 90%.

Is that all you want? Or is it 100%? Well, I say, Lord, I want to be saved from selfishness exactly like that. I want to be saved from these high thoughts about myself exactly like that, selfishness and pride. And if I have these things lurking in me, and an unforgiving attitude is sometimes because of that, some of you have probably been treated badly by your parents, and you still haven't forgiven them.

In some cases, your parents may be dead and gone, you haven't forgiven them. I want to say to your brother, sister, you're in a pretty serious condition. Don't delude yourself that because you understand the new covenant, you're a very spiritual person, you're not.

You got a lot in your head, but very little in your heart. You need to say, Lord, I want to have this constant attitude of forgiveness. I want to be like Jesus.

This is the hope I have that I shall be like him when I see him and therefore I purify myself all the time until I reach his standard of purity. Can you lose one day? No. Think of those people who didn't want to lose

one day to collect gold.

Think of them and put them to shame by the way you seek to pursue after Christ to say, Lord, I want to be like you. And that's why in the new covenant, we speak much about judging ourselves. We're told not to judge others, but to judge ourselves.

In 1 Corinthians 11, there's a beautiful verse, which I often quote, and I've got it many times in Bangalore. 1 Corinthians 11 31. And I look at it like this, I'll explain in a moment.

1 Corinthians 11 31. See a man who does not have high thoughts about himself who has a sober estimate of himself, like we are commanded to have in Romans 12, 3. He recognizes what is the meaning of having a sober estimate of myself. Lord, I recognize there are layers of selfishness and layers of pride in me, and I want to get rid of them as much as possible before you come.

So what am I going to do? I'm going to judge myself. Is there an unforgiving attitude I have towards someone? Or perhaps the other opposite of that, is there somebody I need to forgive? Because I hurt him. He didn't hurt me, but I hurt that person by something I did, or by my attitude to him, by my coldness towards a brother or sister in the church.

Or you hurt your wife or husband by some attitude you had towards that person on one particular day, maybe because of the way his or her parents behaved towards you. And your husband and wife did not stand up for you against his or her parents, and you're disturbed. We not only need to forgive, we also need to ask forgiveness.

I'm sorry that I had this attitude towards you. Please forgive me. So here it says in 1 Corinthians 11 31, if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged.

And the way I understand that is that in the day of judgment, I often use my imagination to think of the day of judgment. In our unconverted days, we have used our imagination for all types of filthy things. Why not use our imagination for something good now? And one of the good things we can use our imagination for is this, which I do many times.

I imagine that Christ has come, and he has set up his judgment seat, and we're all going one by one to get evaluated for our life. And it says in 2 Corinthians 5 that everything we've done in our life will be evaluated. To use a picture, there'll be a big video screen, and from the time of my birth all the way up, at least from the time I'm born again, all the way up to the end of my life, is going to come on that video screen, except for the things that I confessed and forsook.

All the rest will come on that screen. And I want to be ready for that day. And in that day, what does it mean? If we judge ourselves rightly now, we will not be judged in that day.

So I see different people walking up to the Lord in the day of judgment in my mind, in my imagination, coming up to the throne, and the Lord pointing out this, that, and the other, and they're going away with their head hanging down a bit because they're disappointed. Something or the other, the Lord pointed to them. And I say, Lord, when my turn comes, I say to myself, I want you to look at the record, play the whole videotape, and say nothing.

I've got nothing to say. Your record is clean. I want to hear that.

I'll tell you honestly, I want to hear that. And I'm going to do everything in my power to get there because it says here, we will not be judged. It's a promise.

There'll be zero there against me because I judged myself rightly now. It's like studying really hard for the final examination. You end up getting 100%.

The judgment seat of Christ is the final examination. I want to get 100% there. That's why for years and years and years, I've judged myself and I've taught other people, judge yourself rightly.

God promises you, you'll get 100% in the final examination. Don't ever justify yourself saying, but he did that, and that's why I did it. You go along that line, I tell you, you'll probably get 30% in the final day.

I want to get 100%. I'll be honest. I don't care what other people think of me now, but people may give me 10% here on this earth.

I couldn't care less. I want the Lord to give me 100% in the final day. I hope that's your desire to judge yourself rightly.

He who has this hope purifies himself as he is pure. I never want to have high thoughts about myself. Let's go back to Romans 12 now.

There are areas where we can go through a checklist to judge ourselves rightly. Romans 12, and verse 10, be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give preference to one another in honor.

I want to do that. I want to give preference to that weaker brother and to others in honor. I want to be diligent and fervent in my spirit serving the Lord.

I never want to slack off. Just like many of you are so diligent to advance in your profession. Like many of you worked hard to get a visa to come to the United States.

You were so eager for it. You spent so much money and worked so hard, filled up the forms, went for your interviews and did all that. Be equally diligent now to get rid of all selfishness and pride from your life, every layer of it.

And if you face tribulation, it says in verse 12, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints and practicing hospitality. Hospitality is a wonderful thing. And you have to sacrifice in order to be hospitable.

You don't have to have a lot of money. My wife and I were extremely poor, extremely, extremely poor when the church started meeting in our home. We had a home, which my dad gave us.

So we had a home where we could meet. That was okay, but our income was very, very little. But we practiced hospitality.

But when we had guests, we spent more on them than we ever spent on ourselves. And we had small children. My wife had small children and my wife would do that, practice hospitality.

And we don't regret it. I tell you, we don't regret it today. Through that, the church was built in those early days.

We built fellowship with people. We served others, not because there's a verse like that. I'll tell you why we did it.

Because God had been so good to us and forgiving us and making us his children. And we say, Lord, the least we can do is be good to others. And very often we were inviting people to our home to see whether they would have an interest in following the Lord.

Many of them didn't. Many of them took advantage of our hospitality and just left, ditched the church and went away. And through the years, we've seen many people whom we have helped in numerous ways who just despise the church and taken advantage of us and gone their own way and selfishness and even criticized and turned against us.

Some of the people whom we showed maximum hospitality to took me to court in their anger. God took care of us. They wanted to imprison me because I exposed their false teachings of their version of Christianity.

But God was with me through those 10 years of court cases. I have nothing against them. God bless them.

It made me a richer man spiritually, that whole experience. But we would continue to pray. And I remember saying, Lord, those people who took me to court, if I see them again, I'd be glad to show hospitality to them again.

I have zero against them. How can I have something against people who made me a better Christian? Oh, it was a little inconvenient those 10 years. I agree.

But it made me a better Christian. How can I have anything against them? No. Bless those, verse 14, who persecute you and bless and don't ever curse.

Rejoice with those who rejoice. You find someone got something which you desperately were waiting for. You didn't get it.

He got it. Maybe you wanted a child. You didn't get one.

That person got a child. Rejoice with them. Maybe you wanted a job or a green card or something and you didn't get it.

That person got it. Rejoice with them. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Don't be haughty in my name. Here it says in verse 16, Romans 12, 16, associate with the lowly. You know, one of the blessings we've had in Bangalore, I mean, India is a poor country.

So if you go to the villages, you find really poor people. But one of the blessings we have had in the church in Bangalore is that we've had some really poor, not much educated brothers, some who couldn't even speak English properly. Couldn't speak two sentences straight.

I praise God for such brothers in our church. And I would value them just as much as those, yeah, we had some PhDs as well, you know, doctorates and professors and all that. But we had the whole range.

Associate with the lowly. I found some believers, even in NCCL, they don't associate with the lowly. Now, I know you do it from today onwards because you heard this message, not because you are gripped by it, because you want to legalistically fulfill a scripture, not because you feel I can be enriched by my fellowship with this dear brother.

Why didn't you do it till now? Because you had such high thoughts about yourself. Oh, what can he give me? Let me tell you, brother, that's why you're spiritually poor. Associate with the lowly, not just say hi to them, associate with them.

That's what I've done, and it's made my wife and I extremely rich spiritually, associating with the lowly, because James 2 says God has specifically chosen the poor of the world rich in faith. I believe that God has chosen the poor of the world rich in faith. And so I found I've been more blessed by the poor people in the world than the rich people.

I don't know why, but it is like that, but that's God's way. And so I've been tremendously blessed by associating with the lowly. I got light on myself, and I've been helped.

As I sought to listen to them. And if you don't do that, it's because you're wise in your own estimation, it says in verse 16. So ask yourself whether you're doing that.

And I don't mean just as a formality, but a whole attitude towards, if you correspond with people, you correspond with people who are very lowly and poor. I've been tremendously blessed. I do a lot of correspondence by email every single day.

And I tell you, I'm so blessed when I have to correspond with lowly, poor people who've got nothing they can give me, nothing spiritually, no other way. Of course, financially, in any case, we don't take anything from anyone, but they cannot offer me anything spiritually. I'm so blessed to be associated with them.

I want to encourage you. These are to be like Jesus. He associated with the lowly.

He was called a friend of publicans and sinners. Those were considered low level in those days. Never pay back Romans 12, 17, never pay back evil for evil to anyone.

Respect what is right in the sight of all men, if possible, as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Let it never be said about you, my brothers, sisters, that from your side, you're not at peace with anyone. If you have an argument with your husband or wife, settle it immediately.

If you're carnal, settle it at least by sunset. That's what it says in Ephesians four. That's the outer limit.

Don't let the sun set on your anger. It says in Ephesians four, verse 26 or somewhere there. That's the outer limit, but the whole heart of Christians forgives immediately.

Never, never keep a grudge against your marriage partner, not even for a single moment. If you feel that person was hurt, rightly or wrongly, by what you said or what you didn't say, go and ask forgiveness and restore that relationship. Very important.

Restore relationships with your children. I hope your fathers recognize that if there's a distance come between you and your children, who should take the first step? Well, you know, from God's example, God is a father. And when he had a problem with you, or you had a problem with him, who took the first step? He never did anything wrong.

We are the ones who did wrong, but God took the first step and sent his son to restore fellowship with us. That is the example of godly man follows, purifies himself as Jesus is pure. Jesus had a problem with me and he took the first step, not only when he came to earth, but ever since in my whole Christian life, he's always taken the first step.

When I wandered away from him, backsliding, he took the first step to come and restore me. He didn't wait for me. Oh, let him come back when he wants.

No, he came after me. Malachi 4, 6, it says in the last days before the great and terrible day of the Lord, Malachi 4, 5, the Holy Spirit will restore the hearts of the fathers to the children first, and then the hearts of the children to the fathers. You see the order there.

You have to restore fellowship with your children. Then their fellowship will be restored with you. Don't say my child is so stubborn.

Well, you work on it and build fellowship with that stubborn child. It's your responsibility. All this is included in purifying ourselves as Christ is pure.

So as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all men. Never, Romans 12, 19, never, never, never take revenge. Never take revenge.

And sometimes the way husbands and wives take revenge is just by being silent. Keep quiet. You think that's not revenge? That's one of the worst forms of revenge.

You say, I never said anything. Exactly. You're taking revenge by being silent.

Don't be a legalist and say, I never opened my mouth. God's not fooled by all these explanations. Never take revenge.

If somebody does harm, it says you're do good to that person. Well, those are just a few areas. But I want to say, my brothers and sisters, let me come back to what I said at the beginning.

If anyone thinks he's a somebody, when he's a nobody, he's deceiving himself. Self-deception is more dangerous than Satan deceiving us. Satan's a deceiver.

Sure. We're alert against that by taking warnings from scripture, but be careful that you don't deceive yourself. Look at Jesus, looking unto Jesus, saying, Lord, help me to see how you were totally free from pride and selfishness in every area of your life.

I want to look at that example. I want to read the gospels and see how there was not an atom of pride or selfishness in you. All the time you acted completely free from pride and selfishness.

You're the perfect example of humility. I want that in my life. That is true Christianity.

Anything less than that, whatever you speak about new covenant or new covenant church or anything like that, is just garbage. It is not making us more like Christ. Let's bow our heads before God for a moment.

Please ask the Lord to show you whatever he wanted to show you. I did not preach a three-point sermon. I spoke what was in my heart and in the haphazard way that I spoke it.

If the Holy Spirit spoke to you, my brother, sister, respond to him and say, Lord, help me to judge myself so that one day when I stand before you, I will not be judged at all. Heavenly Father, we are a needy people and we pray that you'll help us through the Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/l11iSjNSpDg.mp4>

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