

# God gives His grace only to the Humble

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of coming to a place of humility and being willing to be brought down to zero in order for God to work through us. It highlights the need to let go of seeking glory for ourselves and instead exalt Christ alone in our lives. Through examples from the Bible like Paul, Moses, and Jacob, the message stresses the power of God being made perfect in our weakness when we surrender our own strength and abilities.*

**Scripture:** John 15:5, Philippians 4:13, John 1:37, John 15:1, John 21:1

**Topics:** "Humility", "Exalting Christ"

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## Description

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## Transcript

The Apostle Paul was a very honest man about his personal testimony. And when we realized that he was one of the greatest servants of God in the history of the Christian Church, his personal life and also in what he accomplished. So there's a lot that we can learn as to why God could use him so much.

We may not have the same ministry. God gives a different ministry to each person. And when Paul said, follow me, he told the Corinthians, follow me.

He told the Philippians, follow me. What he meant was not be an apostle like me or a preacher like me. No, we can't follow him there.

It's just like when Jesus said to his disciples, follow me. What was he telling them? He wasn't telling them to raise the dead and walk on water or turn water into wine. None of us can do all that.

Always that phrase, follow me in the New Testament relates to life, not ministry. Jesus told us to follow him in the way he lived, not in his ministry. Now it's a very important principle because there are many people who think that I can follow Jesus in his ministry and start healing the sick.

You know, so many of these people who go around claiming to heal the sick, they hardly heal anybody at all. Jesus healed people in the thousands. There are instances where Jesus would pray for people and every single person was healed.

That has never happened in the history of Christianity. Not even the apostles could do that. So he was not telling us to follow him in his ministry.

Paul was an apostle who wrote scripture. We can't follow him there. He planted churches.

We can't follow him there. Some can, but not all. So remember, the word follow me in the New Testament refers to following Jesus or Paul in their life.

And that's where Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. And we should be able to say that also. You may say, well, how dare I say, follow me as I follow Christ.

Well, the thing is that every one of us has got somebody younger than us. You know, even a second grade student has got someone younger than him in the first grade of the kindergarten. And he can teach them something which they don't know.

Even the kindergarten student, I often say in India, that kindergarten six-year-old boy, he can teach somebody. You know, some of those children who live in the slums in India who don't even know how to read or write, who don't know ABCD, that kindergarten student can teach them ABCD. So every one of us has got someone younger to us to whom, if you're a Christian, you should be able to say, follow me as I follow Christ.

See, when you think of the Christian life, it's like a pathway. Think of it like climbing a mountain towards perfection, something like Mount Everest. Now, Jesus has gone all the way to the top.

And in the snow, you see his footsteps. And Paul looks at those footsteps of Christ, I'm using an illustration, and plants his feet in those footsteps. He hasn't reached 30,000 feet, 29,000 feet, like the top of Mount Everest, but he's somewhere, maybe 5,000 feet.

And then I see Paul's footsteps, not in his ministry, but the way he lived. And I can see his footsteps, and I say, I can follow them. And there are people behind me younger than me to whom I can say, hey, fellas, follow me as I follow Paul and follow Christ.

This is what our Christian life should be. It's not merely preaching. Jesus said, follow me more often than he said, believe in me.

Follow me, follow me was the word he frequently used. So, in Paul's life, there's one thing that he tells us about his life, which revealed how he got the power of God in his life. Now, many people think of being filled with the Holy Spirit as the answer to everything.

Now, that's important. I believe that is very important. I myself have experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit.

But if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, and you don't understand this other truth, which I want to emphasize this evening, you will never experience the power of God flowing through you. You'll only glory in an experience, which you can testify to for the next 25 years. I had an experience way back there.

Boy, it was fantastic. That's not what we are supposed to talk about. Paul hardly ever spoke about his Damascus Road experience where he met the Lord, or his experience when he reached Damascus and Ananias came and laid his hands on him, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

He's mentioned that once or twice, but hardly ever. But there was something else in his life which he had, the Apostle Paul, which I believe was the secret of why God could accomplish so much through him. And that is something which we can all follow in.

As I said, we cannot follow Jesus in his ministry. For example, the biggest ministry Jesus did was die for the sins of the world. Who can follow him there and all the other miracles he did? So, I want to turn you to 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

If you have a Bible, please turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 12. And here he says in verse, I'm going to read from verse 7 onwards to verse 10. Please follow with me.

Paul had tremendous revelations of God and of God's purposes. And he also says in verse 2 of this chapter, that he had this fantastic experience of being taken up to the third heaven, the immediate presence of God. And when he was there, it says, he calls it also paradise, verse 4. And he said he heard some amazing words in heaven that it is not permitted, verse 4, for a man to speak.

Remember those words. When Paul was taken up to heaven, he heard some amazing words. I would like to hear what he heard.

But he says it's inexpressible. One who goes up to heaven is not permitted to speak about them when he comes back to earth. Now, if you go to a Google search of people who've gone to heaven and come back, there are so many people.

I don't believe all of them. And I'll tell you why I don't believe all of them, because they talk about what they saw there. That itself proves to me that it was not heaven that they went to.

It was their imagination. You know, there are some people who have what I call a very fertile imagination. They can shut their eyes and dream something and imagine they've gone to heaven.

And so I'm not saying they told lies, but their imagination made them feel they actually ended up in heaven when they didn't. They were just lying in a bed and having a dream or something like that. And then they write a book about it.

There's a case of, this is a true story of a young boy who had an accident, and whether he was in a coma or something, and they say that he died. And then a little while later, I don't know whether it was a few hours or days later, he came out of that coma, and his father made him write a book about his experience in heaven. And there's a fantastic story about this little boy going to heaven, and one of the major Christian publishers in America published it.

Thousands of copies were sold. That little boy grew up, and a little later, about five or ten years later, said to everyone, the whole thing was a lie. My dad made me write it.

But you know the number of people who bought thousands of Christians who bought that book and believed it? Don't believe all these things. There are so many stories that Christians, so-called Christians, say to get fame. Paul never said this to get fame.

Remember this, and it will save you from being deceived. When a man is taken up to heaven, actually, there are very few people who got up there. Paul was one of them.

If he hears something, according to 2 Corinthians 12, he is not permitted to tell that to anyone. So, if a man really goes up to heaven, he'll never be able to tell us what he heard there. He's not permitted.

That's just by the way. But he goes on to say, because of these fantastic experiences of being taken up to heaven, and being used to write scripture, and planting churches, and the miracles he did, you know, handkerchiefs that touched his body would be put on someone, and demons would be healed. That was fantastic.

Because of all these experiences, you know what can happen to a man when he is used by God like that. He begins to get puffed up, and he became proud, and Paul is honest about it. He says, I was in danger of becoming proud.

My brothers and sisters, it's a wonderful thing if you can get light on the fact that you are in danger of becoming proud. That the way you speak to other Christians is in a very proud way. I've heard many Christians speak something like the Pharisee.

You know, the Pharisee said, even to God, I thank you that I'm not like other people. And that thought can be in your mind. Maybe you had some wonderful experiences.

Maybe God has used you in some way, or you had a close walk with God, and you can begin to think that you are somebody. And the moment pride comes in, it's the devil. The devil became the devil through pride.

In my lifetime, I've been a Christian 60 years, I've heard many, many people boast to me about what they've accomplished, and where they've gone, and how they serve the Lord. And I'll tell you quite honestly, I have zero respect for all of them. Anyone who boasts to me what they did, I have zero respect for them, because they are not like Jesus Christ.

I'm not impressed by what people do. I'm impressed by character. Don't get impressed by what people do.

If you want to be saved from deception, look for character. Jesus didn't say, see how I turned water into wine, fellas. Come on, follow me.

That's not what he said. See how I've denied myself, humbled myself, came from heaven, made myself a servant. Washing your feet.

That is what he told his disciples to follow him. The way I washed your feet, I've taught you to wash one another's feet. Now, when he say wash one another's feet, he was not talking about actually taking off people's shoes, and getting a bucket of water and cleaning them.

You've got to understand this. See, remember in those days, everybody wore sandals, and the roads were not paved like the beautiful roads here in Singapore. They were mud roads.

We have some mud roads like that in India, and very often in the villages, I go with sandals. And I know what happens when you walk through those roads, your feet are dirty. And when you walk into a home, it's very refreshing if you can get your feet under a tap and wash off that dirt.

It's very refreshing. But those days, they didn't have running water or a tap, so they used to have a bucket of water. Rich homes would have a bucket of water near the door.

Everybody would come in sandals, and all their feet would be dirty, and they would appoint a slave. Many of those homes had a slave, and the slave's job was all the guests who come in, wash their feet. So in Jesus having the last supper with his 12 disciples, he had told the owner of the house, please keep a room ready for me with the food and the table and of course the bucket of water.

But I don't want anybody there. So that rich man did not send his slave up there to wash the feet of the disciples who came. So everybody's sitting there with the dirty feet, and Jesus takes out the bucket and says, I'm the slave here.

What an example. Now what did he actually do? You need to understand. When he said, as I washed your feet, I want you to wash one another's feet.

What he meant was, there was a dirty task that somebody had to do for my friends, my disciples. Nobody was willing to do it. I was willing to do it.

Today, the dirty task may not be washing people's feet, because we wear shoes and socks, and we don't walk on dusty roads. There's no point. That is ridiculous, washing people's feet.

Today, the dirty task may be in your church building, the toilet being dirty, the restroom. Maybe some child used it and has left it dirty. To go and clean that, that is to follow Jesus in doing a dirty job to make life easier for others.

And like that, if we look around, we can find lowly tasks that we can do for one another to show our love for Christ and for our fellow believers. But there are not many people who want to do those things. Everybody likes to get into the pulpit and show how well he can preach or anything like that.

Now, here we read that Paul, when he talks about following himself, he was in danger of becoming proud. And he says that in 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7. I was in danger of exalting myself. I told you it's a wonderful thing if God gives you light on your pride, on your boastfulness, how you very subtly boast about yourself or your children or your family members, how you boast.

You ask yourself for God to give you light on it. There are people who do that and they don't even have the slightest idea that it stinks. It stinks.

I tell you, when I hear that, it stinks. My spiritual nostrils revolts against that. I say, this is the smell of hell.

The smell of heaven is humility. The smell of hell is boastfulness and pride. And I've seen that in a lot of Christians.

I've seen that in the reports that Christians write about the work that they are doing for God. Stinking. I don't know whether you smell hell there.

Well, Paul was in danger of it himself. And God wanted to save Paul from getting proud for one reason. And that is, God is the enemy of the proud.

And he did not want to be Paul's enemy. God resists the proud. That is written in two verses in scripture, James 4, 6, and is repeated again three or four pages later in 1 Peter 5, verse 5. Why is it repeated there?

In case you read past the first mention of it quickly, God repeats it.

I don't want you to miss this. God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. You know, this is such an important message that we need to have it in front of us all the time.

If you want grace, humble yourself. Never boast. The moment you boast, God becomes your enemy.

The moment you try to exalt yourself, God becomes your enemy. The moment you begin to boast about your children, you're going to destroy your children. I'll tell you that.

So many Christians haven't understood this. Paul understood it. But he realized that I need God's help to keep me humble.

I can try to be humble. It can be very artificial. And artificial humility is something that will make you proud of your humility.

And that pride is the worst type of pride, when you become proud of your humility. So God wanted to save Paul from pride for one reason, because God wanted to keep on giving grace to him. And he knew there's a law of God, which is like the law of gravity.

You cannot change the law of gravity anywhere you go. The law of gravity operates that the earth pulls down anything you throw it up, the earth will pull it down. The law of God resisting the proud is exactly the same.

It doesn't matter who is proud, believer, unbeliever, servant of God, preacher. The moment he's proud, God's law begins to operate. God pushes him down.

Even if it's the Apostle Paul. God, it's a law. For example, if Paul jumped off the roof of a high building, the law of gravity doesn't check up.

Is that a believer or not? Let me decide whether to pull him down or not. It operates equally. Believer, unbeliever, spiritual person, Apostle Paul, the law of gravity which God has put into this earth operates equally for everybody.

And I want you, my dear brothers and sisters to understand this law also God resists the proud operates in exactly the same way, whether it's unbeliever, Apostle Paul, you, me or anybody. Once you understand that, you will never want to be proud. You'll never want to boast about anything because God will become your enemy that moment.

He will oppose you. He will oppose you. He'll oppose you.

You know, I've seen Christians and I've observed Christians for 60 years now. And there are some believers born again believers whom I've known for 30, 40 years. I've seen them consistently in our churches for 30, 40 years.

And in those 30, 40 years, they have not grown spiritually at all. It's like seeing a 40 year old man sitting in the kindergarten, learning to spell CAT is cat and BAT is bad. What do you feel about that person? You feel sorry for the poor man.

What's he doing 40 years in the kindergarten? That's how I've seen some believers. And I know why God has kept on opposing them. That's why they don't get any fresh revelation from God.

They don't become more Christ-like, they still lose their temper and they still get irritated and upset and they love money and they get anxious and worried and they boast about how much they pray and fast and every mark of a carnal person, exactly the same as it was 40 years ago, they're in the same position today. Why is that? That guy should have been getting a spiritual PhD by now, but he's in the kindergarten. Because God was resisting him all the time.

There's only one reason why Christians do not grow spiritually, God is resisting them. Every time they try to grow up, God pushes them down. He pushes them down because he sees some pride in them.

He sees their glory in something in themselves. And if you realize that Paul was in danger of it, how much more you and me? So he says here, very honestly, I was in danger of exalting myself. It's absolutely honest.

So how did God humble him? It's very interesting. It says here, God gave him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan. In other words, God allowed Satan to afflict Paul in some way.

Now one way in which Satan afflicts God's people, we read in the book of Job that Satan came to God and asked permission to attack Job's body. Now that's a wonderful lesson we learned there, that Satan could not touch Job's body without first getting God's permission. The Bible says that there was a wall around Job, another wall around his family, and another wall around his property.

There were three walls around Job. And Satan himself says that in Job chapter 1, I think it's verse 11. Satan says to God, God, you put three walls around Job, one around him, another around his family, around his property, I can't touch him.

Did you know that? That if you're a humble person, if, it's a big if, you're a humble person, there are three walls around you. Around you personally, around your family members, wife and children, and around your bank account and all your assets and your property. And the devil cannot touch any of them without God giving him permission.

In other words, God opens up one of those walls, fences or walls, whatever you call it, and tells Satan, okay, you can go in and attack his property. Wall number three, I make a little opening in that for you. Satan went in and destroyed all of Job's property.

He couldn't do that until God had given him permission. I mean, Satan hated Job for years, but he couldn't touch him until one day God said, okay, I'll let you touch him, because I'm going to teach Job a lesson. And Satan asked Job, what about the second wall around his family members? God said, okay, I'll allow you to go through the second wall as well.

And Job had 10 children, and he killed all of them. And there was one more person in that second circle, that is Job's wife. And he had permission from God to kill Job's wife.

But Satan said, well, his wife is more useful for me alive than dead, because I can use her to nag Job and nag Job and nag Job every day, so I won't kill her. I think Satan keeps some wives alive just for that purpose, to keep on nagging their husband, irritate them day and night. He could have done it, and he didn't do it.

He knows whom to kill and whom not to kill. And then the third was around Job's personal being. And the devil says, can I get through to him? And God said, okay, Satan, you can touch his body, but you can't kill him.

And so Satan went and attacked Job. You read all this in Job chapter 1, chapter 2, with what I think was leprosy. And why I say it's leprosy is because you see him later on sitting outside the gate, and it was the lepers who sat outside the gate.

And he was scratching himself with a pot shirt, because it was all itching all over him. Yeah, so Paul calls this thorn in the flesh in verse 7, a messenger of Satan. Satan gave him some sickness.

Now, the reason why God allowed Paul to have the sickness, it says here, is very clearly mentioned, to keep me from exalting myself. So God, like this, were punctured Paul's balloon, so they didn't fly up in the air, brought him down to earth, so that God could keep on giving him grace. So when God breaks you, your inner strength, in some way, and humbles you, it's one of the best things that he can ever do for you.

He's trying to bring you down to zero, so that he can bless you and make you a blessing to others. Don't resist God when he does that, because that's God's way of blessing people, not only in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament too. And Paul goes on to say, he didn't understand this in the beginning.

Here was this thorn in the flesh. Now there's another passage in Galatians, which indicates that it's probably some type of pus that Paul had in his eyes, that is constantly dripping, and it was a repulsive sight, because in Galatians 4, Paul says, you people saw me and you didn't despise me for this sickness I had. In fact, you loved me so much that you guys would be willing to take out your own eyes and give them to me.

You read that in Galatians 4. That's how we know it was probably some type of eye problem, the job Paul had, which was so repulsive to people that he said, Lord, can't you get rid of this for me? Why do you want me to stand before people and this thing would look down on me? This great man of God is having eyes that are leaking all the time. And God said, no, I won't do it. Does God heal every sickness? Here's the answer.

No. He does heal many times. I've experienced that myself.

But I also know he doesn't heal sometimes. And if he doesn't heal, there's a very good reason for it. Here, Paul prayed three times.

And he would have prayed 30 times if he did not get an answer. Paul was the type of person, there was no rule saying you should pray three times. He would pray until he got an answer.

He got the answer after three times because he was sensitive to God's voice. And God said to him, I'm not going to heal you. You need this weakness throughout your life to humble you, to break you.

Otherwise, you become proud and I'll become your enemy. And Paul, I don't want to be your enemy. I want to give you keep on giving you grace for the rest of your life so that I can use you mightily all over the world everywhere and make you write scripture and do so many wonderful things.

But I cannot do that if you become proud. But with all the tremendous experiences you've had and the wonderful ministry you've had, you are in danger of becoming proud. So I have to do something for you.

That's why I've given you this. So don't ask me again for it. You will not be healed.

But this will keep you humble. Every time you get up to speak with his eyes leaking, you'll be humbled. People will say, this guy can heal the sick.

Look at his own face. He can't heal himself. That'll keep you humble, Paul.

Don't worry about what people think about you. What people think about you is fit for the trash can. Forget it.

What do I think about you? I see, Paul, you're a humble man. I decided to keep you humble so that I can keep on giving you grace. I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, which would you rather have? The appreciation of human beings because you boast to them about what all you've done for the Lord or you've taken up to the third heaven or something like that? Or would you rather have zero approval from men that men, human beings despise you, but God's grace is upon you every single day and you have wonderful experiences with God and he uses you according to his purpose and nobody knows about it? I believe the best way for God to use me is in a way that nobody knows about it.

Why should people know about what God is doing with me? I mean, my relationship with Jesus, I'll tell you honestly, is like a love relationship between a bridegroom and a bride. Now, why should you know what I as a bride do for my bridegroom? You know, if someone loves a girl who loves a boy, it doesn't want to advertise to the whole world what gifts she gives him or what she does for him. No, it's just between her and him.

And if you have a love relationship with Jesus Christ, exactly like a girl who's engaged to a boy has with him, if it is exactly like that, you will never want other people to know what you do for your bridegroom. If you go around advertising it, that proves that you don't have a love relationship with Christ as a bridegroom. Think about it.

Our conversations, husband and wife, you don't want other people to hear the loving words you speak to each other. No, it's entirely private. That's why when I speak in unknown tongues, I never do it in public.

Never, never, never. It's a love language between me and my bridegroom, and nobody ever hears it. Just like if I express something loving to my wife, I don't want you guys to listen to it.

And when I say something to the Lord, whether in English or in unknown tongue, I don't want you to express, you to listen to it. This is the type of relationship that Jesus wants every one of us to have with him. A private, secret relationship.

You know, in the Song of Solomon, it says, my beloved is like a private garden. That's the word used in Song of Solomon. A private garden exclusively for me.

I go into that garden, and I take the fruit of that garden, the bridegroom says, just for me. That's the type of relationship, the best type of relationship that any Christian can have with Jesus Christ. Read the Song of Solomon.

That's the type of relationship Paul had. So, all these dealings that he had were to humble him so that he and the Lord could have such a close, intimate relationship, like husband and wife. Like bride and bridegroom.

I want to ask you, do you have that type of relationship? It is God's will that every single one of you who's born again should have that type of relationship. But you can't have that if you're proud. Because God resists the proud.

And he doesn't want to resist you if you're his bride. But he'll have to resist you, because that's his law. He resists the proud.

So, when Paul recognized this, he stopped praying. He said, that's fine, Lord. Let my eyes keep leaking.

I will not pray that I should be healed, because it humbles me. This sickness humbles me. And so, the Lord said to him, in verse 9, my grace is sufficient for you, because my power is made perfect in your weakness.

It's a fantastic statement that you need to understand, every one of you. God's grace is equal to his power. Power is another word.

God's grace is another word for God's power. You read that in that verse. My grace is enough for you, because my power, that is my grace, is made perfect, works perfectly when you're weak.

When you're strong, it will not work perfectly. I have to make you weak before I can accomplish my purpose through you and manifest my power through you. And that's a great secret, which many Christians have not understood.

I'm very thankful that God revealed that to me when I was a very young Christian. I was born again when I was 19 and a half, way back in 60 years ago. And I started studying the Scriptures, but I found a great lack of power in my life.

And I used to go to an assembly that never preached about the power of the Holy Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But as I read the Scriptures and I read the testimonies of some godly men, I found these men had an encounter with God, where the mighty power of God came upon them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit.

And so I began to see God as a young 23-year-old young man when I was still working in the Navy. I said, Lord, I want this power in my life. I want this baptism of immersion in the Holy Spirit, the power of God.

And so as I studied the Scripture, I was led to the passage where Jesus received the Holy Spirit coming upon him. You know, that was at the baptism of John, when John the Baptist immersed Jesus in the river Jordan. As he came up, the Holy Spirit came upon him like a dove.

And his whole ministry was changed after that. You know, from that moment up till that moment, Jesus had never preached a person. But from that moment, everything changed.

He began to cast out demons and he began to heal the sick and he began to preach powerfully. The Holy Spirit came upon him. And I saw that even for Jesus Christ, for 30 years, what he could not do, not could not do, God did not allow him to do it, came all of a sudden it started when he was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

And I said, Lord, that's what I need. That's what I need in my life. The anointing, the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, so that I can speak God's word prophetically, so that I can speak God's word almost without effort, by the way Jesus spoke.

It comes through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. But then the Lord showed me something else there, which I never read anywhere else. God opened my eyes to see, as it were, the Lord was asking me, when did Jesus get this power? It's when he allowed John the Baptist to immerse him in the water, bury him completely and lift him up.

That's when the power of God came upon him. And I understood as I meditated on it, that Jesus symbolically was accepting death to his own self. I'm willing to die to my will.

You know, he prayed in Gethsemane, not my will but thine be done. He was willing to die to his will. In fact, in John 6, 38, it says, I came from heaven never to do my own will, but to do the will of my father.

So in the river, he was symbolically accepting death to his own will, allowing other people to push him down, allowing other people to humiliate him, hurt him, kill him, put him right down, believing that the father would raise him up. That's the meaning of baptism. And that's why baby's baptism does not picture that.

You sprinkle some water on a head, that's not baptism. Jesus was saying, I accept death to myself. And the father will raise me up.

And then from that, as I meditated on it, the Lord showed to me, you're seeking for the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, here's the secret. You have to be willing to be pushed down.

Let me allow people to push you down. Like John the Baptist pushed Jesus down. And Jesus didn't resist it.

And you don't resist it. When people speak evil of you, when people accuse you falsely, when people push you down in one way or the other, just accept it. Believing, the Lord says that I will raise you up.

You know that the Bible says that it was the father who raised up Jesus from the dead. Nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus raised himself. Jesus gave himself to go to the cross.

That he did. He told the Roman soldiers, you come take me. I'm he.

I'm Jesus. Take me. But he never raised himself.

The father raised him from the dead. He allowed John the Baptist to put him down. John the Baptist raised him up.

So symbolically, he was saying, I will allow people to humiliate me, hurt me, kill me. I know the father will raise me up. There, when he submitted himself like that, the Holy Spirit came upon him.

And what the Lord said to me from that passage was, if you are willing to go that way of death to your self-life, if you're willing to let people humiliate you, hurt you, accuse you falsely, do all types of things, and you accept it without complaint, and you keep your mouth shut, and let people do all that, you believing, the Lord says that I will raise you up. You will have my power all the days of your life. But the Lord said, the day you feel that you have graduated from that way, and you don't have to walk that way anymore, my

power will depart from you.

I have feared that. I said, Lord, I never want your power to depart from me. I choose that way, and I'll go that way all the days of my life.

And I can say before God, even today, I seek to choose that way of death to myself. When people tell false stories about me, or accuse me, I keep my mouth shut. They hurt me, and the people have taken me to court.

I forgive them. I leave them. They do all types of things.

I've had some amazing experiences of being put to death, as it were. And I've accepted it. And I've seen the result.

The Father always raises me up. The Father gives me power. You know, this has been my experience.

You may or may not believe it. When I get into a pulpit to preach, even today or any other day, I say, Lord, I really don't know what to say. But there's no shortage of power.

There's no shortage of words that can bless people in heaven. If you will let that flow through me, I'm available. But I have to die to myself.

I have to die to seeking my own honor. I have to die to the desire to be known as a great preacher. I have to die to every single thing that will exalt Zak Poonen.

Zak Poonen must be buried, so that Christ can be exalted. The people are drawn not to Zak Poonen, but drawn to Jesus Christ. And I say, Lord, that's what I want to do all my life.

I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, I've experienced that for more than 1963, which is what, 57 years. You can experience that if you are willing to let God bury you and your reputation and your name and your self-life and shut your mouth so that you never boast again about what you have done for God or what you imagine that you've done. You know, I'll tell you something that I've discovered.

I've read a lot of reports of Christian work. And I've read a lot of reports about Christian work in India. And I live in India and I know what goes on there.

And I tell you, a lot of it is a pack of lies. A pack of lies. Christians telling lies, boasting about what they have done.

And I've heard that so much that I see through all the hoaxes among Christians who boast today. I'm not fooled. I'm not fooled.

When people tell me their stories, out of graciousness, I listen to them. But I don't believe one single word. I know the whole thing is a pack of lies.

Because I don't see humility in that person. Christ-like people are always humble. You never find Jesus going around saying, hey, fellas, do you know how many demons I cast out? Hey, fellas, do you know how many sick people I healed? You don't find Jesus talking like that? Even the apostles didn't.

Humility was the primary mark of Christ and the primary mark of every one of God's servants. So if you're willing to be buried, let your name be unknown, and give up your rights, and allow other people to push

you down, I tell you something, the Father will raise you up. You will experience resurrection power in your life.

And so, you may not be called to be a preacher. I'm called to be a preacher. And so, in my particular case, I need God's power to enable me to speak.

I'm not called to be a healer, so I don't ask God for that. But I'm called to be a teacher of God's word. So I say, Lord, you must give me light so that I can understand your word clearly, and you must give me the ability to express that in a very simple way so that your people can understand the truth.

I can't do it. I can't find the illustrations that will make that truth clear and simple to God's people, but God has. God's got infinite wisdom.

And if I'm willing to die to myself, he'll give it to me, provided I don't seek glory for myself. And if I ever tend to exalt myself, he'll give me a thorn in the flesh to humble me because he loves me. I know my Lord loves me, and he will not allow me to exalt myself because he wants to bless me.

And if you love the Lord like that, I tell you, he may give you a thorn in the flesh, too, to humble you. If you are determined that Christ alone should be exalted in my life, that people should follow Christ and not you. I remember many years ago, I read this lovely passage in John chapter 1. I was reading it, and I said, oh boy, what a lovely statement.

It's talking about two of the disciples of John the Baptist in John chapter 1. They saw Jesus coming, and John the Baptist said, there's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, John 1 29. And again, later on, verse 35 and 36, when Jesus was standing there and two of John's disciples were watching him, and John the Baptist said, there, that's the Lamb of God. And listen to this.

This is the verse I had in mind. It's a beautiful verse, a simply fantastic verse, John 1 37. They heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

They didn't follow John the Baptist. They heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And I said, Lord, I want that to be written on my tombstone when I die.

They heard him speak, and they didn't follow him. They followed Jesus. Do you want that? Do you want people to follow you, or do you want people to hear you speak and follow Jesus? What's your goal in life? So many Christians, they want people to admire them, and that's why they keep boasting.

I did this, and I did that, and I went here, I went there, I met this person, and I met that person, and I went to this country, and I've gone to so many countries. That's exalting yourself. That's the mark of Satan, who exalted himself, always trying to show off himself.

Jesus never, never did that. Never follow such a man. Usually, such a man is telling a pack of lies.

Don't believe it. I can see through. I've had enough experience in Christian life and ministry to see through the hoaxes, the multitudes of hoaxes there are in Christendom today.

Can't fool me. They may be able to fool you. They can't fool me.

They heard him speak, and they followed Jesus, and that's the way God wants us to be, but he has to break us first. That's the lesson I learned there, that Jesus going to the water now. When you look at the

Old Testament, there are many examples of this.

Let me just mention a couple of them. There was a man called Jacob, a twin brother of Esau. They were both born as children of Isaac, grandchildren of Abraham, and God said, I am going to accomplish my purpose through Jacob.

And he changed his name to Israel, and the entire nation of Israel came through that one man, Jacob. But in order to do that, God had to do a work in Jacob, because Jacob was a crook. He was a very shrewd person.

I mean, imagine he was a twin, and he came out grabbing his brother's leg. I've never heard of any twin coming out like that. It's almost as though, hey, Esau, get back.

I want to go first. That's what he was, and he didn't manage to go first. Esau beat him to it, but he grabbed his leg.

And when the parents saw Jacob coming out like that, they named him Grabber. That's what Jacob means, Grabber. And all his life, he was called Grabber, Grabber, Grabber.

Later on, he grabbed the birthright also from Esau by cheating him. And later on, you read, he went to his father-in-law's house, and he wanted to grab his pretty daughter, but the father-in-law was smarter than him, and gave him his elder daughter first. You know, have you ever thought of that, how in the world he married the elder daughter? It's a very interesting story, how Laban succeeded in giving Jacob, who could see Rachel very well.

He knew what Rachel looked like. How in the world did he marry Leah at the wedding? You read it. It's a very interesting story.

Laban was a bigger crook than Jacob. You know, sometimes God makes you meet your match with someone who's more crooked than you, and that's what happened to Jacob. Because, you know, usually, the wedding feast is after the wedding.

But in that particular wedding, Laban said, let's have the feast before the wedding, because he wanted to get Jacob drunk, so that he wouldn't know who he's marrying. So they had the feast before the wedding. It's very shrewd.

And Jacob was completely drunk. And Laban says, give me your hand, and his eyes are closed, and he puts his hand, he doesn't know into whose hand he puts his hand, and it was Leah. He didn't know that, because he was drunk.

And next morning, he wakes up in bed and says, hey, who's this? This is not Rachel. And he met his match in his father-in-law. God broke him there.

He wanted Rachel, you got Leah. Now, he said, but I still want Rachel. Oh, God, you've got to work another seven years and get her.

And God broke him, broke him, broke him. Finally, we read in Genesis chapter 32, there's a symbolic struggle there. God coming down and wrestling with Jacob.

He was trying to teach him. You know, Jacob, this is what I've been trying to do all through your life. I've been trying to break you, but you don't break.

So now I'm going to do something to you. He broke his hip socket. He was a young man, you know, compared to people lived up to 180 years those days.

So Jacob was a young man. He was a young man of 60. He broke his hip socket.

And from that day onwards, Jacob had to walk with a cane. Can you imagine a 25-year-old young man walking with a cane? It's pretty humbling. Jacob was humbled that day for the rest of his life.

He walked with a cane. And it's a very interesting thing you read in the book of Hebrews chapter 11. It's a very, very interesting Hebrews 11, where it says, Moses split the Red Sea.

Abraham got a miraculous child at the age of 100. Joshua pulled down the walls of Jericho. Samson shut the mouths of lions.

Daniel shut the mouths of lions. And in the midst of all these fantastic miracles, it is written, Jacob leaned upon his staff. So what sort of miracle is that? That is the greatest miracle of all.

God succeeded in breaking that proud man and teaching him, lean upon me all your life. That staff was a picture of Jacob having to lean upon God. But that happened only when he was broken.

He had to be broken for the power of God to come upon his life. Go to Moses. The Bible says that Moses, at the age of 40, was a very strong man.

With one blow, he killed an Egyptian. There are very few people who can kill a person with one blow. He was so strong, he hit an Egyptian, who were pretty strong people themselves.

One shot and the guy was dead. And it also says in Acts chapter 7 that Moses was very, very eloquent. He was powerful, handsome, eloquent, going to be the next Pharaoh.

And God said, I want to use this man to lead my people. But he's not going to lead my people in the way Pharaoh leads Egypt. It's an altogether different way.

And so this great prince of Egypt, God takes him for 40 years to live in the wilderness, looking after sheep. And that's not all. He married a girl and he had to live with that girl's father for those 40 years.

It's pretty humbling to live with your father-in-law even for one year. Can you imagine living with your father-in-law for 40 years? Have any of you lived with your father-in-law, any of you men? Well, if you haven't, I'll tell you it's not a very enjoyable experience. But Moses, 40 years living with the father-in-law, this great prince of Egypt, God humbled him, humbled him, humbled him so much that one day at the age of 80, when God came to him in the burning bush and said, I want to use you, Moses said, no, not me, Lord.

I'm useless. Is this the great prince of Egypt? He says, Lord, I can't even speak. This man was fluent at the age of 40.

God had broken him. He said, Moses, now I can use you. Now you are a big man.

You're a very important man. The same lesson, Paul's thorn in the flesh or Jacob's hip socket being broken, Moses being broken so that he lost all his self-confidence. Self-confidence is a great thing when you're doing some work in the world or you're doing some business in the world or you want to accomplish something in society, in the world.

But it's the last thing you need when you come into God's kingdom. He has to shatter that self-confidence so that your confidence is only in God thereafter. He has to reduce you to zero so that he can accomplish his purpose through you.

That's what he did with Moses. And see what happened. See the result.

Before he was broken, with one blow, he killed an Egyptian. If he had gone on like that, how long would he have taken to kill all the Egyptians? But at the Red Sea, this broken Moses, all that he did was lift up his rod and the entire Egyptian army was killed under the Red Sea. What is the lesson? God can accomplish much more through a broken man than a man who shows off how much he can do for God.

Are you one of those people who are trying to show off how much you can do for God? You are Moses at the age of 40. God will never use you to accomplish his purposes until he's broken you and brought you down to zero. I'll tell you that.

Paul, he had to get a thorn in the flesh and be brought down to zero. That's how it has been with all of God's great men. So that all the glory will be his.

So the man doesn't get the glory. The tragedy in Christendom today is there are so many preachers and servants of God as they call themselves. You think of this great servant of God.

What he does, it's like I heard the story of a man who went to listen to two preachers and after listening to one preacher, he said, boy, what a wonderful preacher. And he listened to the other preacher and he said, what a wonderful Savior Jesus is. Who was the better preacher? Tell me.

Was it the one who got an admiration saying, what a wonderful preacher? Or was it the other person who when you heard him, the person who listened forgot about the preacher and said, wow, what a wonderful Savior Jesus is. What type of preacher do you want to be? Tell me honestly, do you want to preach in some such a way that people admire you or they ignore you and follow Jesus Christ? For that you have to be broken. There are very, very few preachers like that in the world.

And I've heard a lot of them on the internet and I've heard a lot of them in the 60 years of my life. Some of the greatest men of God are the people who have, God has broken them in some way, brought them down to zero and Christ is exalted in their life. They have to be broken.

You know, there's a, do you know the last miracle that Jesus did? Do you remember it? The last miracle that Jesus did. It's after his resurrection. It was the catch of fish that Peter and his friends had.

And that was the greatest lesson that Jesus wanted to teach them. Always the lesson in all the miracles was this. You have to come to zero, then I will do my work.

The first miracle was the wedding in Cana. When did Jesus turn the water into wine? Until, if there was only one glass of wine left, he said, no, not yet. There's still one glass of wine left.

I'm not going to do anything. When the last glass of wine was over and they had come to zero, the Lord says, now I can act. And he gave them more wine than they ever had before and better wine than they ever had before.

What's the lesson there? Come down to zero. Have you heard, read the story of Mary and Martha and John Levin sent a message to Jesus saying, Lazarus, the one whom you love is sick. What do you do when you hear somebody you love is sick? You drop everything and run.

You know what it says in John Levin? Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick and he stayed there for a few more days in the same place. He was waiting for Lazarus to die. And when Lazarus died, he went and raised him up.

What is the lesson there? As long as Lazarus is still struggling to live, he can still lift his hand, at least lift a little finger. I won't go. Let him come down to zero.

Then I will do a work. I'll raise him up. That's the lesson there.

What about the feeding of the 5,000? Lord, there is no bread. Okay, then I'll do a miracle. If everybody had brought their lunch packets that day, there'd be no miracle.

Every miracle that Jesus did was a parable, in a sense. But when you come to zero, I'll do my work. There's a leader of the synagogue called Jairus.

His daughter is sick. And he goes to Jesus saying, my daughter is sick. And Jesus, I think, walks a little more slowly, so that by the time he reaches Jairus' home, the daughter is dead.

Ah, he says, now I can do something. Because now it's come to zero. As long as you're sick, the daughter was not at zero.

So the same thing in the miracle of the feeding of the, of the filling of the boat with fish. They went out at six o'clock in the evening to catch fish, all the disciples. And Jesus knew right then, to the resurrected Christ, he knew they would get nothing that night.

Why didn't he go and tell them? Because they had not come to an end of themselves. Let me repeat that. They had not come to an end of themselves, like many of you have not come to an end of yourselves.

You still think you're pretty smart. You still think you can accomplish something for God. You still think you can do this, that and the other for God.

Let me tell you, God will never use you. You can do things to impress people who don't know the Lord. But you can never impress a man of God.

He sees through all that. They had not come to an end of themselves. So, seven o'clock, eight o'clock, nine o'clock, no fish.

And Peter, the great expert fisherman is wondering why the fish are not coming into my net. It's almost as though God commanded the fish, don't ever go into Peter's net, go to all the other nets. And Peter's net is empty.

Nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, one o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock, four o'clock, no fish. And maybe Peter said, OK, one last time. Still no fish.

OK, fellas, I give up. I'm going home. Then the Lord comes.

When does he come? When will he come in your life? When they had come to an end of themselves. When they had come to the end of all their mighty efforts to catch fish. He did not come earlier.

He did not come to Moses when he was still a little strong. He came to Moses when Moses came to a zero. He did not come to Jacob and turn him into an Israel when Jacob was still strong, capable of grabbing.

He comes when you come to an end of yourself. And when they had come to an end of yourself, Jesus comes on the shore. Who said Jesus did not have a sense of humor? He asked the fellas, hey, fellas, have you caught some fish, by the way? He knows the answer.

OK, you come to zero. Now cast your net on the right side. And it says they caught so much fish that they could not even, their boat was about to sink.

It's amazing what God can do when he has succeeded in reducing you to zero confidence in your own ability to catch fish or to serve the Lord or to do anything. It's the same old story throughout Scripture. Paul is in danger of exalting himself.

I have to bring him down to zero. Some time ago, I illustrated this in my home church. And I'll tell you what I did.

I called seven or eight young men. And I said, I want you to come here one by one. And I said, OK, let me introduce you to the cleverest man in the world, this person.

And I told him to hold a big zero in front of him. You know what he is in God's eyes? Zero. Cleverest man in the world.

OK, next. Now, this is the great athlete, the one who wins the decathlon and every other competition, the triathlon and everything else. He stands with a zero.

Excellent in sports. And I said, here's a good looking fellow, the most handsome person in the world. Zero.

And here's the great famous preacher or politician. Zero. Everyone, zero, zero, zero, zero.

I said, do you know that all these people have no value before God? All your earthly abilities have no value before God. I said, now I'll show you something. Jesus is a one.

So I called one of those persons to a corner and said, what's he now? A zero. And I put this one in front of him. What's he now? Ten.

He's got value now. The only thing that's given him value is that Christ has come first in his life. You take away that, he's a zero again.

And if he can have fellowship with another brother, I said to the other brother, you come there now. It didn't become eleven. What did it become? One hundred.

One plus two zeros. I said, you want to fellowship with another brother? Get another brother who's a zero there. One thousand.

I said, this is the way God works. When you come to a zero and let Jesus be the one in your life, your value increases amazingly. And if you can get a few more zeros in your church, who are willing to be nothing, you'll have a fantastic church with Christ alone exalted and none of the others exalted.

The tragedy in Christendom today is it's very difficult to find Christians who don't want to be exalted. They want to be reported about. They want to be known.

They want themselves to be advertised. They want everybody to know. And God says you're all zeros and you'll remain zeros till the end of your life.

God is very jealous for his son. He's very jealous for his son, Jesus Christ. He will not let anybody touch that glory that belongs to Jesus Christ.

And many, many Christians are touching the glory that should belong only to Christ. They're taking the credit to themselves. They're trying to exalt themselves.

And God says, I push you down. I push you down. You may impress undiscerning Christians, but you won't impress a discerning Christian who'll see through your hollowness.

I've seen many like that. Not one. I've seen many people in many countries who tried to impress me.

I see through them like I see through glass. Empty, hollow, good for nothing in God's eyes. But they think they're very important because most Christians are not discerning.

And so they can fool them. My dear brothers and sisters, let me ask you in conclusion. One simple question.

Do you want to impress men or do you want to impress God? Very simple question. Do you want to come to the end of your life with a big record of things that you could accomplish and you've impressed this people and that people and the other people? Or do you want to hear Jesus in the final day call you forth and say, people despised you on earth. They didn't think much of you.

You hid all your activities from men. Come here. Let me reward you.

Well done, good and faithful servant. That's what I want to hear. I remember when I started my ministry and in those days we used to have these old cameras.

You remember the old cameras where you put a reel inside and you buy a reel and put it inside and wind it and take picture after picture and those were called negatives where all those pictures came into that. Not like these modern cameras, not digital. And then when you come to the end of the reel, you wind the whole thing back and make sure it doesn't get exposed to the light.

Those of you who remember the old cameras, you remember that. And then you take it out and give it to, they develop in a dark room and they print the pictures in the negative. This is how photos were printed.

You children never knew about all that. That's how we did pictures in those days. Now it's also easy.

Anyway, what the Lord said to me was, you know what happens to that negative? Before it is taken into the dark room and developed into printed photos, if you take it out and expose it, the whole thing disappears. The negatives become blank. Now when you print it, there's nothing in it.

It's true. I'm not telling you a story. It's absolute truth.

So we had to be very careful that these negatives never got exposed to light. And what the Lord told me from that was, all the work that you do for me, if you expose it to other people, it'll become blank immediately like those negatives. And in the final day, when I unrolled the negatives, it'll be shown that you did zero.

So hide it. Put it in the dark. Keep it hidden.

One day I will develop it and show the whole world what I did through you. Not what you did, but what I did through you. And that's not because I'm a full-time worker.

Every one of you, my brothers and sisters, if you are born again and Christ is Lord in your life, you may be a secular, secular work. That's fine. God wants to do a work that will last forever.

You don't have to be a preacher. You don't even have to be a man. You can be a woman.

God wants to do a work through you that will last forever, for all eternity. But you have to make sure that you don't do it for the honor of men, that you don't expose your work today. You allow God to humble you and break you, take away your human strength, so that he can manifest the supernatural power of his Holy Spirit through you and accomplish a work that will last for all eternity.

That's how he did it with Paul. That's how he did it with Moses. That's how he did it with Jacob.

And that's the last miracle. That's what he taught Peter, the expert fisherman. Your expert fisherman work is no use for me.

I have to teach you that you cannot even fish. Depend on me. Without me, you can do zero.

That is the greatest lesson. You know, in our church building in Bangalore, we have two verses behind the pulpit. On one side, it says, without Christ, I can do nothing.

That's John 15, 5. On the other side, we have Philippians 4, 13. With Christ, I can do everything. That's the secret of the Christian life.

Without Christ, I can do nothing. With Christ, I can do everything. As I told you, when I get into a pulpit to preach, I say, Lord, I don't know what to say.

I don't know the needs of all these people. Most of them, I don't even know. How in the world can I meet their need? I can't do it.

But I'm willing to be like the branch that stays in the tree, and the sap flows into the branch, and the fruit keeps coming out. And you ask the branch, how in the world did you produce these lovely mangoes or apples? The branch says, I did nothing. By myself, I can't even produce one apple or mango.

I just stayed in the tree. I got rid of all the blockages that prevent the sap, the power of the Holy Spirit from flowing into me. And lo and behold, fruit came out.

I don't know how. Go and ask the Lord how He did it. It's not me.

That is true Christian ministry and service. And that is what God, let me repeat this, that's what God can do through every one of you, not just full-time workers. Maybe you messed up your past life.

It doesn't matter. God, Jesus came for messed up people. He used a Samaritan woman who was divorced five times, read that in John 4, and was now sleeping with a man who's not even her husband.

Would you ever think of using such a woman to do God's work? Jesus used her five times divorced, sleeping with a man who is not her husband. And Jesus said, go and tell people about me. And she became an evangelist in Samaria.

All the people in the town listened to this woman and came to hear Jesus. It's amazing the type of people whom the Lord uses to do His work, isn't it? She had messed up her life. There was nothing she could boast about.

I'm sure everybody in Samaria despised her. But that's the one God uses. Let's learn some lessons from these stories in the Gospels.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Dear brothers and sisters, don't let this be just a message that stirred you temporarily and you go home and you forget about it. I pray that you will learn a lesson, a permanent lesson for the rest of your life from what you heard tonight.

Say, Lord, I want to disappear so that Christ will be exalted in my life. I don't want anyone to know what I do. I want it all to be hidden.

I want Christ alone to be exalted. I'm sorry that all these years, Lord, I've touched your glory. I committed that terrible sin of taking glory to myself.

What a sin it is. I touched your glory. Forgive me, Lord.

Please forgive me. I never want to touch your glory again. I never want to boast about what I have done.

I want to die. Let Christ alone be exalted in my life and let me be forgotten. Let me be unknown.

Let Christ be exalted. That's what I want, Lord. I may never be a great preacher, Lord, but I want to serve you in my own little way.

Maybe you're a sister with mother with children. Say, Lord, I've got responsibilities at home. I've got children.

Can you use me? And the Lord says, Yes, I can use you. If you humble yourself and be willing to be a zero, I can use even you. If I could use a five times divorced Samaritan woman, why can't I use you? Trust Him.

Trust Him. Ask Him to humble you, to hide you behind the cross so that only Christ is seen and not you. You'll be amazed to see at the end of your life how much God is able to accomplish through you.

Never touch the glory of God. Never seek glory for yourself. Heavenly Father, I pray for all these dear brothers and sisters who are here.

I pray that they will learn something today that will change the whole direction of their life. Please, Lord, help them to know what it means to die and be buried so that Christ can be exalted. The power of His resurrection will be manifest in their life.

We pray that it'll be true for every one of us. We humbly ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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