

God Supports the Humble

by Zac Poonen

The most important thing in a church is the presence of God, which is manifested when people live a life of humility and serve others.

Duration: 40:50

Scripture: John 1:14

Topics: "Humility", "Gods Presence"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing God's presence in church meetings and in our personal lives. It highlights the tragic reality of going through religious motions without truly encountering Jesus. The message stresses the need to live in humility, constantly comparing ourselves to Jesus rather than others, and to bring the presence of the Lord wherever we go. It warns against the dangers of pride, the importance of seeking God's presence above all else, and the historical pattern of God raising individuals to restore His glory in the church.

Transcript

One advantage of singing is everybody wakes up. So we do want to sing also. So as I was saying, the most important thing in a church, in a New Testament church, is that people can say at the end of a meeting, God was certainly there.

God spoke to my heart. He was there. Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.

You know, it's really tragic that we can go to so many church services and meet with everybody except Jesus Christ. We heard a message, we heard a good sermon, we sang a good song, but we did not meet with Jesus. That's a tragedy because the glory of the Lord has departed.

It happens throughout Christian history. When the glory of God was manifested through Jesus Christ, it was manifested in a human form. We read in John chapter 1, the word became flesh, John 1.14. John 1.14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

So the glory of God was seen in a human being, Jesus Christ, and wherever he went, there was a glory. The presence of the Lord was there. And I don't know whether you understand this, but we can

understand that, that Jesus was like that.

But we read in 1 John chapter 4. It's an amazing word. It's such a blessed word that in our church in Bangalore, we made a big wooden plaque with these words written on it. 1 John 4.17. It's a very important word for me anyway.

The last part of 1 John 4.17. As Jesus is, so are we in this world. How many of you believe that? I'm not saying it's true. I'm saying it should be true.

When John says it was true in his life, like Paul says, I am crucified with Christ. That was true in Paul's life. You can quote the verse, but it may not be true in your life.

You see, I know Galatians 2.20. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, but Christ lives in me. For you it is a verse. Paul was giving his testimony.

Paul was not quoting a verse. Paul was giving his testimony. I have been crucified with Christ.

It's no longer I who live. In the same way, John was writing his testimony. As Jesus is, so are we in the world.

We're not just to quote that as a verse. It must be real in our life. And when we think of the glory of God, that Jesus, wherever he went, there was a sense of God's presence.

I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, long for that. That there's a sense of God's presence when people meet with you. When people meet with you in your office, in your home, that there's a sense of God's presence.

Then be a little careful about what they talk about when you're around. All of them are cracking their filthy jokes, and then you come there and they suddenly stop because the presence of the Lord has come there. This is how we are supposed to live.

More important than giving out tracts, to bring with us the presence of the Lord wherever we go. That's how we should live. And if you live like that, they will never forget you.

They may hate you. They may fight with you. But they will never forget that once in their life, they came across a saint, a man of God or a woman of God.

Don't you want to be like that? That's what it means to be a witness for Christ. Witness for Christ doesn't mean just talking about Jesus. Anybody can talk about Jesus.

But to be such a manifestation of the presence of God wherever you go, and you must long for that. I've set the Lord always before me. Seek for that life, my dear brothers and sisters, so that the meetings of the church come to a higher level.

That is the most important thing that we should have. As Jesus is, so are we in the world. And when we are like that, God will give us his word also in the meeting.

Do you know that God wants to use each of you? It may not be to preach in a pulpit, but to share his word. With somebody you meet, the presence of God is with you. That's how it will be.

So in the beginning, when the apostles were there, they brought the presence of the Lord with them. That was the most important thing. I want to show you an Acts of the Apostles, chapter 20.

Paul was in a place called Ephesus for three years. And as long as he was there, he brought in the presence of God through his ministry. Listen to this.

In Acts, chapter 20, Paul, verse 17, called all the elders of the church in Ephesus. I don't know how many there were, maybe four or five elders. He called those five elders and said, Hey, brothers, I want to talk to you something.

Because he was never going to see them again. He had told them that you'll never see them again. See, in fact, they wept.

Verse 37, they began to weep aloud and embrace Paul and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word that he had spoken that they would never see his face anymore. He said, Bro, folks, this is the last time I'm going to see you. And they wept, because he had sacrificially served them for three years, day and night.

He never took any money from them. He never wanted any clothing or any gifts. He just served and served and served and served.

But he told them something. Even though he loved them very much, he told them the truth. And that's what I want you to hear.

He says in Acts 20, verse 28, I be on guard, you elders, for the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. Why am I saying that? Because, first of all, I have been with you, verse 31, for three years. Verse 31, for three years, night and day, I kept on admonishing you with tears.

You know, Paul preached night and day for three years. That's about 2,000 sermons. And very often he wept when he preached, because he was concerned that these people are not taking their Christian life seriously.

But he says, now I'm going away. And he says, I'm going to tell you what is going to happen to this church when I go away. Verse 29, after my departure, savage wolves will come inside this church.

Why couldn't those wolves come in when Paul was there? They were scared. Those wolves are the agents of Satan. They could not come and spoil the sheep of God as long as there was a man of God called Paul who brought the presence of God there.

The wolves were scared. They were outside the door. But they stood outside the door and said, we'll wait.

We'll wait till this guy Paul goes away. Once he goes away, we can go right in. All these other fellows, they don't have any ability to keep us out.

Paul knew that also. Paul said, I know you five elders. Once I go away, the wolves will come in and you will not be able to stop them.

Because you don't live the Christian life seriously like I did, Paul says. And not only that, those wolves will come and not spare the flock. They'll tear the church to pieces.

And all of you five people, you're going to gather your little groups after you. Verse 30. From among your own selves, some of you will start speaking perverse things and draw disciples after them.

That has happened. In church history, it's always happened that people try to draw disciples after them. Admire me, admire me.

I want a little group around myself of my admirers. You know what happens in many churches? People want to gather some people around them and the church becomes dead and the glory of God departs, like you read in Ezekiel. Then God has to raise up somebody who will bring the glory of God back.

You know, if you read Christian history, the church became so dead in the 1400s, 1500s. There was only one church around the world, basically, or two, maybe the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church. Both were absolutely dead.

Nobody was preaching about being born again or salvation by faith. They were more interested in collecting money and if you give money to the Pope, your sins will be forgiven. And it was going on like that for hundreds of years till God raised up one man, Martin Luther.

He was a Roman Catholic priest. He saw all this and he read the word of God and said, this is not scripture. And it was one man who stood against the entire Roman Catholic Church and said, what you're teaching is wrong.

They wanted to kill him because he was standing against the whole system. But God was with him. And that's how the whole Protestant movement started.

The churches that are not part of the Catholic Church came because one man stood for the Lord. This is in the early 1500s, which is 500 years ago. And then what happened? Martin Luther died and the wolves came in.

The same wolves that went into the Catholic Church now came into the Protestant Church. Because the man who could keep them out had gone. And the Protestant Church became like the Catholic Church.

Dead. In England, it was like that till in the 1700s, 200 years later, God raised up a man called John Wesley. He stood against this corruption in the Anglican Church, Church of England, which came from Martin Luther.

And they put him out. They said, you can't preach him. So he would preach in the open fields.

And he started another group to honor God, which later on became known as the Methodist Church. He was a very strict man preaching holiness. But then he died.

And again, the wolves came into the Methodist Church. So in history, God raises up someone. There's a new movement that brings purity.

Then after some time, when the man is not there, like Paul said, I'm gone. The wolves come in. And it's all split into different groups.

The glory goes away and then God has to raise up somebody else to bring the glory back in. This has happened. I'm just giving you two examples.

But it's happened again and again and again in church history because that's the only way God can preserve the glory in the midst of the church. And it's very easy for the glory to depart. I believe that what you're seeing in CFC Sharjah now is far, far better than what it was many years ago.

It was really bad in this church many years ago because I watched it for 25 years and I know. And God has done a work. It always depends on the leadership.

If the leadership seeks their own, God is not there. If the leadership is humble, godly people, God is there. And that is why God has brought so many people now to hear the word.

And I'm concerned that you will now go from glory to glory to glory and you will not come to the place where God has to take away his presence from here. Because I remember the days when, in this church, the presence of the Lord was not there, not at all. A lot depends on the humility of all the brothers and sisters.

See, God can never support a proud person. Remember this. He can never support a proud person, whether he's an elder or not an elder.

The moment a person becomes proud, and you can't see it, it's in the mind, it's in the heart. A person thinks, I'm somebody. That happens to many elders.

Immediately, God withdraws. Elder is there, but God is not there. That is what takes away the presence of the Lord from any church.

It's very, very important. Not just the elders, but anybody who brings in pride is bringing in the devil with him into the church. He can call himself Christian, New Covenant Christian, whatever name he uses.

If there is pride in him about anything, maybe he's proud of his education. Maybe he's proud of his spirituality. Maybe he's proud of his Bible knowledge.

Maybe he's proud of his children. Ah, my children are so God-fearing, unlike other people's children. That is enough.

God will depart from that man. Pride is so easy to come, and you ask yourself. Ask yourself.

Maybe you're proud of something. Maybe you're proud of the music. Maybe you can play some instrument.

Maybe you can sing well. Pride. I don't care how well you sing, how well you play your instruments, how well you brought up your children, how much you know the Bible.

If pride comes in, I tell you in Jesus' name, God will resist. Not only he'll leave you, he will resist you. He will stand against you.

And the way I pictured it is like this. You know that well-known verse we quoted often in CFC. 1 Peter.

It's one of the most important verses in the New Testament. And you must know it. First of all, look at James.

James chapter 4, verse 6. You must all know this verse, even the little children. James 4, 6. God is opposed to the proud. But he gives grace to the humble.

God supports the humble. But he's against the proud. And he repeats it a second time.

There are very few verses that are repeated exactly the same. It's repeated in 1 Peter 5. Exactly the same. Verse 5. God is opposed to the proud.

But he gives grace to the humble. Now, why in the world does God repeat a verse twice? There are not many verses repeated so clearly exactly the same twice. Because this is so important.

God is against the people. He pushes the proud people back. And he gets behind the humble people and pushes them forward.

I want God to always push me forward. I'll tell you why. Because the devil is too strong for me.

Because temptation is too strong for me. My lusts are too strong for me. I want God to get behind me and push me forward.

No devil, no demon can stand before me then. No temptation, no lust can stand before me then. I will just keep moving forward, forward, forward.

Because God is pushing me forward. He's supporting me with his grace. And I need only one qualification.

And not Bible knowledge. Humility. Humility.

I must consider other people more important than myself. But the moment I become proud, Ah, I know the Bible better than others. I can sing better than others.

I can preach better than others. What is more stupid? I can pray better than others. Can you imagine anything more stupid than that? I can pray better than others.

As if prayer is some performance like a drama. So many things. I got a better job than others.

More stupid thing, my car is better than others. Believers, can you imagine believers thinking about all that? Or my children are so good compared to other people's children. Ah, you should see those children, see my children.

God is opposed to such people. He pushes them back. And their children will also suffer.

Believe it or not. But if you are humble. Humble does not mean, Oh, my children are wayward.

That's not humility. That is stupidity. To say, if there is anything good in my children, it is God who did it, not me.

That is humility. If I know the Bible, it is because God gave me that grace. If I have a gift, it is because God gave it to me.

It's got nothing to do with me. That is humility. Humility is not to have nothing.

It is to have everything. Jesus had everything. But he was the humblest man that walked on the earth.

No man did miracles like Jesus did. And he said, learn humility from me. The humblest man who walked on the earth was the greatest preacher, the greatest miracle worker, the holiest man that ever lived.

He was the humblest. So the father supports humble people. And he opposes proud people.

And the moment I become proud, God opposes me. Remember that. So if you want the presence of the Lord always with you, you have to remain in humility all the time.

And I'll tell you, it's not easy. Because if you do one thing better than others, you're immediately tempted to be proud. Something you did and God blessed you, and you become proud.

You prayed for somebody and accidentally he got healed. And he was recovering in any case. It was just a cold or something, but you prayed for him and the cold went over after five days.

He would have gone in any case. Ah, I prayed. That's enough.

He only got a cold, but God has become your enemy. This is the type of stupidity. We are so tempted to take glory to ourselves for something or the other.

God is opposed to the proud. So then what is the secret of remaining humble all the time? There is only one secret, and I'll tell you this. Because this is a battle I fought.

I said, Lord, I want you to support me all the time. I don't want you to oppose me even for one second any day. How can I be humble all the time? And the solution is, look unto Jesus all the time.

Compare yourself with Jesus all the time. And one of the illustrations the Lord gave me was this. And if you have heard me speak on it, you have heard it before, but I'll say it for the benefit of those who have not heard it.

If in a class a student gets 10 out of 100, 10% in mathematics, can he be proud? What do you think? Yes or no? He got 10 out of 100 in mathematics. Can he be proud? If you heard me, you know the answer. Yes.

If all the others in the class got 4, and 3, and 2, and 1, and 0, this boy who got 10 comes home and says, Mommy, I came first in the class. Son, how much did you get? 10 out of 100. How did you come first? Everybody else got 4, 3, 2, 1? You can get 10 out of 100 and be proud.

You can just know this much of the Bible more than somebody else, and you're proud. It is so easy. How did he become proud? He compared himself with others.

The secret of pride is compare yourself with others who are not as good as you, who don't know the Bible like you do, who can't sing like you, who can't play the instruments like you, whose children are not as good as yours, whose job is not as good as yours. Pride. Comparison, comparison, comparison.

That's the only way to be proud. Okay. Now you take the same boy and put him in another school where everybody in the class gets 98, 99, 100.

What happens to this proud boy? He suddenly becomes very humble. How did the same boy suddenly become humble? By comparison. He compared himself now with that fellow who got 98, that fellow.

How much did you get, brother? 99. I got only 10. He suddenly becomes humble.

So how did his pride come? By comparison. How did his humility come? By comparison. So here is the secret.

If you compare yourself with all the other believers, you will always end up being proud. But if you refuse to compare yourself with other believers, and say, I will always compare myself with somebody who got 100%, Jesus Christ. I'm going to look at him and compare my life with his every single day of my life.

I give you a guarantee. You cannot be proud even for one minute. And God will support you every day.

Don't you want such a life? I know. I never heard this message when I was a young Christian. I used to go to churches where they preached all types of things.

They never told me to take up the cross. They never told me the way of humility. But I thank God I discovered it from the Bible.

Let us run the race, fixing our eyes on Jesus. I saw the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament. In Isaiah chapter 5, he was saying, Woe unto these people, woe unto those people, woe unto those people, which is right what he said.

He was condemning those people for their sin. In the next chapter, Isaiah chapter 6, he says, I saw the glory of the Lord, and he said, woe unto me. How did this man suddenly say, woe is me? Because he saw the glory of the Lord.

He saw it once. You and I can see it all the time. The glory that was seen in Jesus Christ when he lived on this earth, and that is why for so many years now, I've been preaching one message.

Dear brothers and sisters, fix your eyes on Jesus Christ. Read the gospels. See how he lived.

And let the light of that glory show you your need. That you are not living like he did. That you are not walking as he did.

You're not serving the father as he did. Your attitude to money is not the attitude Jesus had. You're not looking at women the way Jesus looked at women.

There's a lot of impurity in you. And so, if you keep your eyes on Jesus, your attitude will change in so many things. They called him Beelzebul, prince of devils.

You know what he told them? He's spoken against the word ordinary man. You're forgiven. Was he an ordinary man? Have you heard this expression, son of man, son of man, son of man? Many times in the gospel, Jesus used to call himself son of man.

And I asked the Lord once, I said, Lord, what is this son of man? It just means the son of an ordinary man. I'm an ordinary man. Jesus lived on earth as an ordinary man.

He who was almighty God lived as an ordinary man. So when they called him devil, Matthew chapter 12, he said, it's okay. You're called an ordinary man, the devil.

You're forgiven. I said, Lord, let me never in my life think that I'm anything more than an ordinary man. Whether people call me a devil or a false prophet or a thief or a crook, let them call me what they like.

They have only spoken against an ordinary man. It's okay. You're forgiven.

Let them not speak against the Holy Spirit. That's what Jesus said. So when you see yourself as an ordinary man, you have no problem.

You know, I often tell people in our church in Bangalore, do you remember the first day that you came to CFC Bangalore? You heard of this church that is preaching holiness and you were fed up with all the dead churches and you decided to come to this church. And you were so happy that day to get a last seat in the church. But now I said, some of you brothers have been here for 15, 20 years, and you consider yourself senior brothers.

Now you're not sitting in the last seat. Now you're not small in your own eyes. Now you're not an ordinary man.

Now you're a senior brother, a senior sister. That is why the grace of God has departed from your life. I've seen it happen.

And when I see it happen, I don't judge them. I say, Lord, don't let it happen to me, please. Don't let it happen.

You can take away. You know, I've actually prayed this prayer. Lord, you can take away my money, empty my bank account.

You can take away my health. You can take away my ability to speak. You can take everything away.

You can take away my reputation before people. Take it all away. But don't take away your presence and your anointing from my life.

That's all I want. Can you pray that prayer? Lord, that's all I want. And the Lord says, you humble yourself all the time.

My presence will be with you all the time. I have set the Lord always before me. And then he'll be at my right hand.

I will not be shaken. Psalm 16, we read that. That's the way all of you should live.

Problems can come in your home. Children are sick. Financial difficulties.

Visa problems. Fired from your job. I have set the Lord before me.

I will not be shaken. He's at my right hand. I will not look to man for help.

This is the way how God wants us to always live. As Jesus, remember that verse, 1 John 4, 17? As Jesus is, so are we in this world. I find, for example, so many believers, they don't think much about borrowing money.

Some people borrow money and they never return it. They conveniently forget it. But I used to think like this.

You know, I'm 76 years old now. I've never borrowed money once in my life from anybody. Because the Bible says, owe no man anything.

When my wife and I had very little, when we even wondered whether we'd have enough money to buy milk powder for our first baby son, I said, fine. God will take care of us. But I will not borrow.

I will never borrow money. Because as Jesus is, so are we in this world. And I used to think, can you imagine Jesus going to some neighbor's house in Nazareth and saying, can you please give me some money? My heavenly father let me down today.

It's pretty bad. So what to do? Since my heavenly father has let me down, can you please give me some money? Can you imagine Jesus saying that? No. I said, as Jesus is, so am I in this world.

My heavenly father is not going to let me down. Jesus was poor. But his father didn't let him down.

And so I said, Lord, if sometime you make me poor, it's fine. I'm not going to go and ask other people. I'm not going to give people the impression, oh, God let me down.

You've heard me quote this example also. Let me repeat it for the benefit of those who haven't heard it from me. John 7, after Jesus had preached in the temple, we read that Jesus stood in the temple and cried out, John 7, 37, the great day of the feast.

If any man is thirsty, and his message in the temple was so powerful that the people said, John 7, 46, we have never heard a man speak like this man preached. Powerful message in the temple in Jerusalem. Now Jerusalem was not his home.

He lived about 80 kilometers away or 100 kilometers away in a town called Capernaum. Far away. It's like Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

Jesus lived over there, far away. And there were no cars. It had taken a couple of days to walk up there.

When you read in the Bible, he came from Capernaum to Jerusalem. Remember, it took him two days. So he was in Jerusalem, and he preached.

And at the end of the sermon, it says in John 7, 53, everyone went to his home. But next verse, John 8, 1, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Why did Jesus go to the Mount of Olives? Because nobody invited him home.

Can you imagine, after listening to this powerful message that everybody is blessed, nobody went up to him and said, Lord, where are you sleeping tonight? Your home is in Capernaum. Where are you? Nobody asked him. This is the ingratitude of man that you can be blessed by the greatest preacher that walked on the earth and not even care to think, where is he going to sleep tonight? This is how ungrateful a lot of religious people are.

So Jesus said, fine. It's not raining. I can go and sleep under the trees in the Mount of Olives.

No complaint. No thinking, oh, fellows don't care for me. This is what it means to walk as Jesus walked, that you have no complaint when people are not considerate about your needs.

You don't feel sorry for yourself. No. You put that self to death.

Okay, my father cares for me. I don't need an invitation to anybody's house. I'll go and sleep under the trees.

And the next morning, John 8 verse 2, early in the morning he came and again began to sit and teach the temple, in the temple, all the people, and think of this is even worse. Next morning, nobody says, hey, by

the way, Lord, where did you sleep last night? Sorry, we completely forgot about asking you last night, where did you sleep? Nobody asks. And Jesus also did not try to hint, you know, how some people hint, you know, last night when I was sleeping under the trees in the Mount of Olives.

Man is very clever to introduce a little hint to make other people feel awkward that you guys never invited me to your home. Not a sentence about that. This is what it means to walk as Jesus walked.

Never, never to think of yourself. Can I bless these people? It doesn't matter. They don't have to think about me.

My heavenly father cares for me. The one who runs this universe cares for me. Why should I care for these human beings? These are the little things that you can learn about Jesus if you read the Bible slowly, carefully, and say, Holy Spirit of God, show me the glory of Jesus and help me to be like that.

You may be such a big man, but the more you see Jesus, you'll become smaller, smaller, smaller, smaller, until you become nothing in your own eyes. And God will support you 100% everywhere. He'll support you in your office.

He'll support you in your home. He'll support you in your church. He'll back you up 100%.

I have proved it for 40 years in CFC. You humble yourself before God and keep looking unto Jesus. You will bring the presence of the Lord with you wherever you go.

Be a man of God like that. Be a woman of God like that. And you children, you can be like that too.

Don't judge other people. Don't check whether he's living like that. It's none of my business.

You worry about yourself. Okay, brothers, let's think about these things and let's pray. Thank you for listening.

I pray there will be some eternal result from what you heard today. The glory of God will be greater and greater and greater in this church in the days to come. Because those of you who are part of the church decided to take this message seriously.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we have bowed before you, help us to honor you in everything. Bless this church with the blessing of the Lord that makes rich.

We pray that the glory of God will be seen here. The presence of the Lord will be there in the meetings and people will come drawn to you. That we shall truly be a New Testament church.

Of people who live, seek to live with all our hearts as Jesus lived seven days a week. We humbly ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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