

Humility and Self Judgement

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility in the Christian life, drawing parallels to the law of gravity where water flows to the lowest point. It highlights how God gives grace to the humble, as seen in 1 Peter 5:5, contrasting it with the resistance towards the proud. The speaker stresses the significance of judging oneself first, seeking God's correction and guidance, and prioritizing a humble heart over ministry accomplishments. The message underscores the value of simple acts of kindness and goodness towards others, rather than focusing solely on visible achievements.

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:5, Psalms 139:23, Matthew 7:22, Matthew 25:34

Topics: "Humility", "Grace in Christian Life"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility in the Christian life, drawing parallels to the law of gravity where water flows to the lowest point. It highlights how God gives grace to the humble, as seen in 1 Peter 5:5, contrasting it with the resistance towards the proud. The speaker stresses the significance of judging oneself first, seeking God's correction and guidance, and prioritizing a humble heart over ministry accomplishments. The message underscores the value of simple acts of kindness and goodness towards others, rather than focusing solely on visible achievements.

Transcript

We know that humility is one of the greatest virtues in the Christian life. The Bible says, and I believe this is the reason why I mention that, is because there is a law in the spiritual, not many, there are many laws, and one of the laws in the spiritual world is similar to what we see in the law of gravity. Water always flows to the lowest place first.

If there is a puddle after the rain, it will be in the lowest spot in the road that the puddle is there. It's because of the law of gravity. It's a law that operates all over the world.

And in the same way, the Bible says, God gives grace to the humble. If you are not familiar with that, that promise is in 1 Peter 5, verse 5. It's a very important promise. God gives grace to the humble.

In other words, if you are humble, you don't have to ask for grace, it will just come. See, that lowest spot on the road does not ask the rain to come there, it just comes. It comes because it's the lowest spot on the road.

If some high spot on the road pleads with the rain to make a puddle there, it just won't do it. This is because you are too high. So if you are too high, and we ask God for grace, and if it doesn't come, you know why.

God gives grace to the humble. It's a law. You can't change it.

And the puddle of rain, water, will always be in the lowest spot on the road, not in the high spots. The high spots will be dry. And that's why you see a difference among Christians.

And God's aim is to bring every one of us to a low spot. I don't mean a low estimate of ourselves. There's a lot of difference between humility and a low estimate of ourselves.

Some people say, oh, you people are trying to have a low estimate of yourselves. I say, I certainly don't have a low estimate of myself. Why should I? I'm a son of God.

The king of the universe is my father. How in the world can I have a low estimate of myself? But that doesn't mean I'm proud. Humility, you can be the humblest person on earth, and have an awareness of who you are.

Jesus Christ was always aware that he was Lord of lords. But he said, learn from me, for I am humble of heart. So, don't confuse the two.

We must never have a low estimate of ourselves, demeaning ourselves, saying I'm rotten, I'm good for nothing. It's not true. I'm a child of God.

I'm a new creation in God. But I'm not proud of it, because God did it all. And that's why it says, humility is a very important thing, it says in Philippians 2, verse 5, have this attitude in yourself which is in Christ Jesus.

I've often said that you can live all your life with that just one verse. Even if you don't know any other verse in the Bible. Have this attitude in yourself at all times, that Jesus had.

Have the same attitude as he had towards sin. Have the same attitude as he had towards women. He always was very pure in the way he looked at women.

Have that attitude. Have the same attitude Jesus had towards money. He used money, but he never loved it.

Have the same attitude that Jesus had towards Pharisees who are hypocrites. Expose them. Speak against them.

Have the same attitude that Jesus had towards people who make money in the temple. Chase them, whip them out. Or money in the church.

Have the same attitude as Jesus had in every area. You can live with that one verse. It's been a great help to me.

Have the same attitude that Jesus had. Whenever I'm reading a book, what would Jesus think of the pictures in this book? Should I see them? A magazine? Chuck it aside. Jesus wouldn't want to look at them.

And I don't want to look at them either. Your entire life in every situation, in your office, in your difficult situations in your office with your boss, and you ask yourself, what shall I do? And I say, I'll tell you what to do. Have the same attitude that Jesus had there.

Jesus humbled himself under Joseph and Mary, who were a legitimate authority over him for 30 years of his life. And then a time came when he moved out of the house, and then he did not have to submit to them. So in every area of life, we can take this one verse and live by it.

Have the same attitude in you that Jesus had. Can you think of any situation in your life where that verse can't help you? It's an amazing verse. But then he goes on to explain it and says, this is what I mean by have the same attitude.

Now notice this, and if you read carefully, it's in your Bible, but sometimes you don't notice it. The first step he took was a step of humility. He was God, verse 6, and he did not hold on to that position of equality with God.

You know how human beings love to show that they are important people, that they are not ordinary people. There are people with a racist mentality who try to show that, I'm not the same level as you. I'm a slightly, slightly superior race to you.

That is the spirit of Satan. It's the spirit of the Antichrist. Christ was God.

What higher position can you have than that? A racist cannot be a true disciple of Jesus. It is impossible. Because he looks down on another person, because of the color of his skin, or because of that person's culture.

Imagine if Jesus had treated you like that. You are far beneath me. Your culture is so inferior to mine.

Where would you be? If you are a disciple of Jesus, you will treat other people the way Jesus treated you. I made that a law in my life. I want to treat other people the way Jesus treated me.

He forgave me so much, I can forgive other people much. Not little, but much. Because that's how Jesus treated me.

Jesus was not a racist in his attitude towards me. He treated me as an equal. He calls me a brother, even though he is Almighty God.

And I say, I can never have a superior attitude to another human being of the race of Adam. I can consider myself superior to a dog or a cat, but not to another human being. Because Almighty God became a human being.

Just like me. So that's the first step of humility. Though he was God, he came down and became a man.

And there is only one type of man. It's not black or yellow or white or red. It's man.

And Jesus became a man. Have this attitude in you, which is in Christ Jesus. He had a position far higher, far superior than any of us can ever have.

And he identified himself with the least and the lowest. He didn't despise anyone. A woman caught in adultery.

He took her side against the Bible reading Pharisees who wanted to kill her. That's God. He identified himself.

He was pure. But he identified himself with the worst of sinners. Because he says, it's the sick people who need a doctor.

Not the healthy people. I came for the sick. I came for sinners.

I didn't come for the righteous people. I remember once at the end of a meeting, I was talking to a nominal Christian couple, who were not born again. They belonged to some denomination, I don't know which one.

And I was speaking to them and I said, I'll tell you why you're not born again. You're coming to Jesus as Christians. And let me tell you the truth, Jesus didn't die for Christians.

Did you know that? He never died for a single Christian. They were shocked. They said, do you know who Jesus died for? He died for sinners.

You come to Jesus as a sinner, you can be forgiven. You come to Jesus as a Christian and say, sorry, I didn't die for you. He didn't die for Muslims or Hindus.

You come to Jesus as a Muslim or a Hindu, sorry, you can't be saved. We are sinners. All have sinned.

There's only one religion. Christians, all human beings belong to. Sinners.

If you come to Jesus as a sinner, you can be forgiven. But if you come to Jesus on any other basis, you can't be forgiven. You come to Jesus thinking you're a little superior to that guy over there, you won't be forgiven.

That's what the Pharisee prayed. Lord, I thank you. I'm not like other men.

Luke 18. Consider that guy over there. Look at him.

I'm not as bad as him. He was not forgiven. And the other guy who was such a wretched sinner, standing in the corner, he didn't even have the courage to lift up his head to God.

He bowed his head and said, oh God, be merciful to me. And you know, it doesn't come out very clearly in the English. In many translations in Luke 18 it says, Be merciful to me, a sinner.

That's not how the original is. The original is, be merciful to me, the sinner. And in the margin of my NASB it says that.

The sinner. Why does he call himself the sinner? That publican. It's in Luke 18, verse 9 onwards to 14.

You can take time to look at it sometime. Why does he say, me the sinner? He's saying, I feel I am the greatest sinner on earth. Or probably the only sinner on earth compared to all the others.

That's why he was forgiven. You come to Jesus believing that you are the greatest sinner on earth, you'll be forgiven in no time. And you know, when you see the gravity of sin, you can understand why Paul came to a place in his life where he said in 1 Timothy 1.15, I am the chief of sinners.

He wasn't saying this to act humble. There are many people with a false humility will say, Oh, I'm a great sinner. But they don't believe it.

Paul was saying it really. In fact, if you look at Paul's life, there's a progression. When he was 55 years old, he said in 1 Corinthians 15, and let me turn you to that verse, if you don't know it, 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 9 and 10.

He said, 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 9. He wrote this when he was about 55 years old. I am the least of the apostles. That was his opinion when he compared himself with Peter, James, John, all the other apostles.

He said, I am the least. I'm an apostle, sure, but I'm the least among them. Five years later, he wrote Ephesians when he was 60 years old.

Then he writes in Ephesians 3. Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 8. Ephesians 3, 8. He says, I am the least of all the believers in the world. When he was 55, he thought he was the least of the apostles. When he was 60, he's gone further down.

He says, I'm the least of all the believers in the world. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever in your life felt you're the least of all the believers in the world? Or do you feel sometimes you're not as bad as some other believers? That's because you're so far away from God. Paul was pretty close to God.

The closer you get to God, the more you become lower in your own estimation. Then at the age of 65, this he wrote when he was 60. When he's 65, he writes 1 Timothy 1.15. 1 Timothy 1.15, he says, in the last part of that verse.

I'm the greatest sinner of all the sinners that ever lived. How do you like that? So many people's progression in holiness is, I've become a little holier now. I'm a little more holy now than I was ten years ago.

But Paul was going the other way. He says, I'm the least of the apostles. Five years later, he's the least of all the believers.

And ten years later, he feels he's the greatest sinner on earth. How's that? Was Paul committing murder and adultery and all types of things? No. I personally think he was the holiest man on earth.

How does the holiest man on earth feel he's the greatest sinner on earth? It means that he's so close to God. It's like, if you think of God as a very bright light. And, you know, you got maybe a stain or some discoloration on your clothes.

When you're far away from that light, you don't see it. You think your dress is pretty clean. And you come closer and you say, hey, it's not as clean as I thought.

And you come much closer and you see even greater filth there. It's like a deeper scan. You come close to God and God gives you a deeper scan of your inner life and your heart.

In fact, that is one of the marks that we are making spiritual progress. That we discover deeper levels of what other people don't even consider as sin. We see it in ourselves.

And that's the mark of spiritual growth. So, that is the first thing Paul says in Philippians 2. Have the same attitude that was in Christ. Though he was God, he became a man.

And then, secondly, Philippians 2 again. Have this attitude in Christ, as he was in Christ. Verse 6, although he was God, did not hang on to that position or exalt himself, but became a man.

Then, becoming a man, he went one step lower still. He became a slave. See, among human beings there are kings, and there are middle class people, and then there are slaves.

Slave is worse than a servant. A servant gets a salary. A slave is like furniture.

If you buy a chair, you buy a slave in the market in those days. It's the same thing. You can destroy that chair if you like, you can kill the slave.

Nobody will question you. A slave had no rights. He was not paid a salary.

He could not escape. He could not leave the job. It's like if you buy a chair, you keep that chair in your house forever.

The chair cannot complain about you painted black or green or whatever you like, and destroy it one day. A slave was like that. Zero rights.

Not all men are like that. There are very, very few in history who were utter slaves. And Jesus not only became a man, he went lower down, and it says he became like a bond slave.

He took a very low position. A slave cannot complain. If his master says, you stupid idiot, he cannot say, why do you call me that? The Pharisees turned to Jesus and said, you prince of devils.

He kept quiet. He said, you're forgiven. See, that's the position of a slave.

I don't have any rights. People can call me anything they like. Have you taken that position? Can your wife call you by any name she likes? Or can your husband call you by any name he likes? You're not a slave.

You have some rights. Say, how dare you call me by that name? You're not a slave. You're a human being, all right, but not a slave.

Jesus went lower still. He became a man, second step, humility again. He became a slave, and you say, well, slave is the lowest.

Is there anything worse than that? Yes, there is. And that is a murderer and a criminal. A criminal and a murderer is worse than a slave.

The Romans had slaves, but they never crucified them. They just treated them badly. But if they saw a murderer or a criminal, they crucified him.

They didn't put him in prison, they crucified him. That's what they did to all criminals and murderers. And it says here, Jesus went lower than a bond slave.

First step, God to man, humility. Second step, man to slave, humility. Third step, it says in verse 8, he humbled himself to become obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross.

Death on a cross. Crucifixion was the worst type of killing that man has ever invented. You know, man has invented hanging and lethal injection and electric chair and, you know, firing squad.

There are so many ways in which they kill criminals, even today. But crucifixion, hanging on a cross for hours, with all the pain and shame, public shame, was one of the worst forms of killing that man has ever invented in the history of humanity. Remember, the thief on the cross wasn't even dead after six hours.

They had to forcibly kill him. So it's a very painful, slow, and very humiliating, shameful death with all the people staring at your almost naked body. Humiliation, pain, suffering, everything.

And it's interesting that Jesus waited in heaven until man had discovered the worst form of killing and then came to earth. He said, now I'm ready to come to earth because now man has discovered the worst form of killing people. Now I'm ready to go and die.

You know, if Jesus had to die for our sins, he could have died of a cold or a fever or cancer or something like that. Why should he die in this painful way? Okay, die for our sins, die in a sort of a decent way, in some corner somebody stabs him to death or something. No, it didn't have to be like that.

His humility must go to the bottom, lower than any human being ever went. From the highest height has gone to the lowest depth that any human being has ever gone. That's why Jesus came.

If Jesus had come earlier when people were just hanging then, somebody who was crucified later on could say, well, Lord, I went lower than you. I was crucified, I wasn't just hanged. Jesus waited until they discovered crucifixion and came to earth then, so that he'd have the most humiliating death that any human being has ever had in the history of humanity.

So what are the three steps? God to man, humility. Man to bond slave, humility. Bond slave to criminal, humility.

That's why I often say there are three secrets in the Christian life. Humility, humility, humility. If you've learned it, you've learned the secrets.

It's there in Philippians 2. This is one example of how we can read the Bible and not see it. It's there. It's there in your Bible.

I've had people tell me, Brother Zach, after listening to you I got a new Bible. It's the same old Bible, but you didn't read it slowly, you were too much in a hurry. You were too much in a hurry to do other things.

But if you read it slowly and carefully and honored God and allowed the Holy Spirit to show you. Now, I myself never saw these things for many years, so I'm not blaming anybody. But I'm just saying there's such depth.

I mean, I've read this book for 55 years and when I read it today, I see things there which I say, wow, how is it I missed it after reading it all these 55 years? I didn't see that. That's how this book is. It's a well that never runs dry.

You keep on drawing water from it and there's the same level of water again tomorrow. Haven't you seen wells like that? No matter how much water you draw from it, there's still the same level of water the next day, the next year and 15 years from now. We've got a well like that in our house.

It never seems to go down. It's always there. No matter how much water you draw from it, it's there.

It's wonderful. God's Word is like that. So I want to encourage you folks just by these examples to show you that there are things in God's Word you're missing, which can not just be knowledge for you to preach.

Some people listen to me preach and say, ah, that's a good point for me to preach somewhere. Dear me, don't do that. You're seeking honor.

You want to preach that somewhere so that people think, oh, what a wonderful person that is who preached that. Don't seek honor. Seek obedience.

Say, Lord, when I read that passage, I don't want to go now somewhere and proclaim the three secrets of humility. I want to practice it. I want to go down and be humble because God gives his grace to the humble, not those who understand the three steps of humility, no.

Those who are actually humble, and there are many people who cannot explain these three steps who are humble. They get grace. And there are people who can explain these three steps because they heard me preach on it who don't get grace.

That's why I say, don't look for an explanation. It's better to have humility than to know its definition. I hope you know that.

It's better to be holy than to know the definition of holiness. We are such intellectual people that we always try to live in the intellect. And that's why we never grow spiritually.

Christianity is not a religion of the head. It's a religion of the heart. And if I leave it in my head, it doesn't make me better.

It'll just make me a Pharisee with a lot of knowledge and make me a very proud person. Now the thing is, it's not just that God gives grace to the humble. In 1 Peter 5.5, I left out the first part of it.

The first part of it says that God resists the proud. So it's not that God ignores the proud. That would have been okay.

But if there's any pride in me, God resists me. So here's a law. The law is, if you're proud, whoever you are, God will be your enemy.

I mean, that's like saying, if you jump off the roof of a building, whoever you are, the law of gravity will pull you down. The law of gravity is not going to check up, is this a believer, is it a wholehearted believer, jumping off the roof, or is it a sinner? It couldn't care less whether you're a wholehearted believer or a sinner. The law of gravity says, I don't care.

You just come down. I pull you down. And so the same way, God resists the proud.

He's not finding out, oh, is he a believer? Is he a serious believer? And is he proud? Doesn't matter. He'll be your enemy. He resists the proud.

Just like I said, the law of gravity doesn't care who you are when you jump off the roof of the building. You'll go down. And you'll kill yourself.

God resists the proud. Proud believer, proud unbeliever, it makes absolutely no difference. He's the enemy of all the proud.

If you have a little bit of pride in you, God resists you a little bit. If you've got a lot of pride in you, he resists you a lot. And I pictured it like this.

God gives grace to the humble, but he resists the proud means, this is New Covenant truth. You'll never find in the Old Covenant the word grace. New Testament word grace is not found in the Old Testament.

I know in the King James Version it says, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. I looked up the original Hebrew and it says, it's not grace, it's favor. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord, which is very different from New Testament grace.

New Testament grace is something that could only come after Jesus Christ. There's a great verse in John 1, 17. The law came by Moses, but grace came by Jesus Christ.

There was no grace on earth before Jesus came. John 1, 17 settles it. So whatever people had in the Old Testament, it was not New Testament grace.

That's why they could not get victory over sin. Because it says, sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are under grace now. And God gives his grace to the humble.

So when I put these two verses together, okay, let me use my logic now. I did not get victory over sin in a particular situation when somebody provoked me, I lost my temper. I didn't get victory.

Why? According to Romans 6, 14, at that moment, I did not get grace. Then I go further back, why didn't I get grace? Because 1 Peter 5, 5, God gives grace only to the humble. So at that particular moment, God saw I was not humble, so I did not get grace, so I did not get victory.

It's like 2 plus 2 is 4. I did not get victory because I didn't get grace, I didn't get grace because I was not humble. That means there was some amount of pride in me. So whenever I am defeated by sin, all I need to ask myself is not why.

The answer, you know, why is you didn't get grace? And that also you don't have to ask why. Why you didn't get grace is also the answer, is that you were proud. All you need to ask every time you are defeated by sin is, Lord, where was I proud? I learned to ask myself that question.

When I was defeated by sin, I was eagerly longing for years for victory, and I didn't get it in some time. I never asked why. I knew I didn't get grace.

That also I knew why. I was proud. I would ask, Lord, show me where was I proud, that you could not give me grace at this time.

And then the Lord would show me. Maybe sometime the previous day, where I was puffed up by something, something I did, maybe something I did for the Lord. And the Lord would say, there.

And I've been so thankful for those revelations in my life where God showed me my pride, because I've seen pride like cancer. I'd be very grateful to a doctor who gives me a free scan and shows me a little cancer inside me. The doctor says, a good thing is detected now.

We can remove it and you can be healthy. Wouldn't you be grateful to a doctor like that? Forever? Sure. I'd say, Lord, thank you so much.

This fellow who provoked me to anger, revealed a cancer in my system of pride that I could not respond to him graciously. Thank you. Thank you for revealing it to me.

I want to be free from the cancer of pride completely. That's why I say in the Christian Church, we judge ourselves. I don't ask, why did he get angry with me? No.

The question I ask myself is, why did I respond in anger? That's a more important question to me than why did he get angry with me. Why did he speak to me like that? It doesn't matter. Why did I respond like that? That's a much more important question to me.

The world is full of people who say, how in the world did that fellow speak to me like that? Who does he think he is? Why did he speak to me like that? I never ask that question. I ask the question, why did I respond like this? And if you want to grow spiritually, judge yourself, don't judge the other person. The household of God consists of people who judge themselves first.

It's one of the great truths I discovered about building the Church of Jesus Christ. When I discovered it, I said, Lord, wherever I build a church, and now the Lord has planted about a hundred churches, many parts of India, in the villages, cities, and in other countries, and I always say, Lord, I don't want to build a church of people, just a big crowd of people who sing nicely and preach nicely. No.

Not even a bunch of people who watch my videos. I'm not interested in that. I want to gather together people who have learned to judge themselves first.

Because I know that's the mark of the household of God. And I'll show it to you in scripture. Turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 4. 1 Peter 4 and verse 17.

It says here, Time has come for judgment to begin in the household of God. It's one of the few places in scripture where you read that expression, the household of God. That means the family of God.

I have believed that the church is the family of God. It's not a congregation. People sitting together in a building, listening to a good sermon, are like a lot of people sitting in a good restaurant, because they offer good food there.

There are some restaurants that are very popular. Anytime you go there, it's crowded, because there's good food. And there are some so-called churches, mega churches, that are very popular, because the preacher is a great preacher, very gifted and very entertaining to listen to.

I said, Lord, I don't want to build anything like that. I'm not interested in building a mega church. I'm interested in building the family of God.

And you know the difference between a restaurant and a family. Here's a family meeting around the dining table in a home. It's not as crowded as that 300 people sitting in a restaurant.

These are maybe five or six people, but it's a family. They belong to one another. They're committed to one another.

That is the only church I want to build in my life, because the church is meant to be the family of God, not a restaurant where people come to taste interesting preachers. So we read here in 1 Peter 4, 17, The time has come for judgment to begin in the household of God, and this judgment must begin with us first. Let's stop there.

Judgment must begin with us first, in the family of God. So I've learned the secret how to build the family of God. Very simple.

Gather people who are born again, and teach every one of them to judge themselves first. Even if the other person did something wrong, you judge yourself first. Like you know when God asked Adam, Where are you? And he says, I was afraid.

He was hiding behind a tree. If you want to know how sin makes a person stupid, here's the first example of it. He thinks by hiding behind a tree, God won't see him.

It's like some hide and seek game where you hide behind a tree, God won't see you. That is a classic example of how sin makes you utterly stupid. Anyway, God spoke to him and said, Who told you that you were naked? He said, I was afraid, I was naked, and I thought you would... Who told you? Did you eat of the tree I told you not to eat? For which there's only a very simple answer, yes or no.

But sin also makes a man justify himself, blame other people, it's all the result of sin. Lord, the whole problem is with my wife. Are those familiar words? The whole problem is with my wife.

And secondly, why in the world did you give me a wife like this? That also Adam said. Adam said those first words, by the way. Not you.

Adam said it long before you said it. Why in the world did you give me a husband like this? This wife whom you gave me. Oh.

So God is at fault ultimately, right? The simple question to ask Adam is, Why did you open your mouth and eat it? Judge yourself, man. Even if God gave you this wife, you know the wife gave you the fruit, why did you open your mouth and eat it? Judge yourself. You can learn that in the Garden of Eden.

And that's why Adam was kicked out of paradise. Learn another lesson from the thief who hung on the cross, the opposite of that, who went into paradise. The paradise from which Adam was kicked out for blaming his wife and eating a tree, eating fruit.

A murderer went into that paradise. How? He took the blame. That's all he did.

He said, I'm guilty. Why didn't the other murderer on the other side go into paradise? He was just as bad. He wouldn't take the blame.

That's all. The only difference between the two murderers was one took the blame completely, the other wouldn't take it. One judged himself, the other didn't.

We judge ourselves, we become part of the family of God. That other murderer said, get me down from the cross. I've done wrong, maybe I deserve a few years in jail, but not crucifixion, I'm not that bad.

That's what he was saying, bring me down from the cross. I don't deserve crucifixion, I deserve maybe a few years in jail. But the other thief said, the other murderer and thief said, I deserve this.

I'm guilty. I'm not blaming my parents for bringing me up badly. No, no, no.

I'm not blaming the bad company I fell into, that they gave me bad habits. No. I'm not blaming the judge who was hard on me or the policeman who caught me.

I'm not blaming a single soul on the earth. It's me. Lord, just have mercy on me.

Remember me, when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus knew the kingdom will come only after another 2,000 years. And the thief didn't know that.

So he told the murderer, don't worry, you don't have to wait 2,000 years, you'll come into my paradise today. You know, a lot of people haven't learned that lesson, which that thief knew. Judge yourself first.

Your paradise will begin today. Judge your wife first, you will lose paradise today. That's the difference between Adam and the thief on the cross.

You know how Christians say to sinners, go and kneel at the foot of the cross. I'd say, yes, go and kneel at the foot of the cross of the thief, first, before you go to the cross of Jesus. Go and kneel there and say, Oh thief, please teach me something, how to judge myself.

Then go to the cross of Jesus and ask him to forgive you. You have to learn something. Even from that murderer on the cross.

There's a very important verse, the household of God is a place where we judge ourselves first. Now I want to ask you, in the light of that, are you a part of the family of God? You know what will happen in your home, if you and your partner, husband or wife, learn to judge yourself first. Today, you will enter into paradise, like Jesus said.

Your home will be a paradise on earth. Why are you kicked out of paradise? Because you say, you are the cause of it. Have you ever said words like this to your husband or wife? How many times have I told you not to do that? Or how many times have I told you, you must do this first? How many times? Wow! This is the expert speaking.

No wonder, so many Christian homes are more like hell on earth, rather than paradise on earth. And yet it's such a simple rule. Judge yourself first.

I'm not preaching, but I didn't practice. I didn't practice it for many years. The beginning of my married life was like anybody else's.

Stupid, foolish, blaming other people, blaming God. But it's gone. I've learned the secret.

And it's such a simple secret, to judge myself first. Whatever may go wrong, to judge myself first. Because that's a mark of belonging to the family of God.

I want to be a part of the family of God. I want my home to be a part of the family of God. I'll give you an example.

The Bible says, to use the rod on your child, so that they don't go to hell. It's written in Proverbs. Use the rod and you'll save your child from hell.

Discipline your child while there's hope. Train up a child in the way he should go. When he's old, he will not depart from it.

I had four sons, and I wanted every one of them, not just to be born again and baptized. A lot of people want that so that people in the church will say, Oh, Brother Zach's sons are born again and baptized. I

couldn't care less what people say.

I said, Lord, I'm interested in what you think about them. Are they disciples? Are they following you? So I followed scripture, and I disciplined them. Not always with a rod.

Sometimes I'd just take certain privileges away from them, like you can't play cricket today. That was such a terrible punishment that they'd come and say, Dad, give me the rod. Let me go and play cricket.

But it was depriving them. You don't have to always use the rod. You have certain privileges.

I don't mean ice cream and food like that. That is a crime, to punish them saying no ice cream. No.

Food, bad boy or good boy, will all get the same. But certain other privileges, so you can't play today or something like that. But I believe very strongly in discipline.

But once they crossed the age of 12, they became 13 and a teenager, I said, they're too old now to be physically punished. Because if I haven't succeeded in 13 years to get them to obey me, I'm not going to succeed now. So what happened with one of my boys, he one day deceived me.

I never cease to tell this story because it's a very interesting story of how God treats us. He deceived me one day in a very small silly thing, which was absolutely meaningless. He wanted to play cricket for the school because he was selected for the school cricket team.

And there was a cricket match that day. He thought if he mentioned that to me, I would say, no, no cricket, go to your class and study. That's more important.

But he misunderstood me. I would have allowed him to go, but he didn't think I would. So what did he do? He dressed up in his school uniform to go to school and he hid his cricket uniform inside his bag and went and played cricket.

I don't know, maybe he won the game, I don't know. But by the time he came back, I knew that he had cheated me for such a silly thing. And when he came and he saw my face, when he came back from school, he knew I had discovered.

And he knew what happened on previous occasions whenever I discovered something like that. So I said, son, we've got to talk about this, let's go to the other room. There was always a room where we would go to for such exercises.

So we went there and I said, let's kneel down. He was not below 12 now, he was about 15 or 16. So I said, I know what you did.

You tried to fool me, cheat me. Okay, let's kneel down. I put my arm around him and I prayed.

I said, Heavenly Father, tell me where I failed as a father. That my son should deceive me about such a silly, unnecessary, useless thing like this. Help me to be a better father.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I said, okay son, you can go.

That's it. He got such a surprise. It was never like the old days.

And you know, ten years later, when he came to speak to the young people in Bangalore, he told this story. That's why I don't mind telling it. It's not a secret.

And he said, that did more good to me than all the spankings I ever got in my life. Because I, as a father, judge myself. It's a wonderful thing.

I'm not teaching you a psychological technique that you manipulate your children with. You know, you hear something and say, I'm going to try that technique with my children. It's not going to work.

It's not a technique. You've got to love your children. You've got to have a heart to God.

You must do what the Holy Spirit tells you at a particular time. There are times when I would have to rebuke my children. I mean, I have not used the rod on my children when they've grown up, but I've rebuked them.

There are certain times when we have to rebuke them and correct them. That's also, this is not a technique. I'm telling you to listen to the Holy Spirit.

But I do say, you know, a lot of parents when their children grow up, they don't put their arm around them and show their affection and pray for them. I believe you should pray with your children. I believe you should put your arm around them.

That touch means a lot. And it does, even when you pray with your wife or children. A physical touch means a lot.

And that they know that you love them. I know you can say it with your words, but a hug and a touch means a lot more. It's really true.

So, this business of judging oneself is a very important thing. And it's only found in the New Testament. You never find it in the Old Testament, any teaching about judging yourself.

They were so strict according to laws. You've got to do this, you've got to do that. But in the New Testament, I want to examine myself if I have disobeyed some commandment.

Lord, is there something wrong with me? Turn with me to Psalm 139. There's a lovely prayer that David prayed. Psalm 139.

You're familiar with these words, I'm sure. Psalm 139, verse 23 and 24. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts, anxious thoughts, and see if there's any hurtful way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. In the King James Version, it says, if there's any wicked way in me.

In the NASB, it says, any hurtful way in me. And now, the question is, is it something that hurts me? Or something that hurts God? And that's why I like the Living Bible. Is there any way in me that hurts you? I don't know how it is in your translations.

But the Living Bible paraphrase of that is beautiful. It refers the word hurtful, which is translated as hurtful way, as something that hurt God, and not hurt me. And so it says, Lord, show me, is there anything in my life that's making you sad? It's such a wonderful prayer.

I printed it out on a card, many years ago, and gave it to everybody in our church. I said, put this in your front room, that you pray, that you remember every day to ask God, Lord, show me, is there anything in me that's making you sad? Not that's making you angry, that makes us afraid of God. But Lord, is there anything in me that's making you sad? That's the question of a lover.

One who really loves husband or wife, saying, is there anything in my life that's hurting you, that's making you sad? Please tell me. I want to get rid of it. That's our relationship with God.

Lord, show me anything in my life that's making you sad. Beautiful words. That's the meaning of judging yourself.

It's not, I'm afraid God will punish me. Oh Lord, please show me, let me get rid of that before you punish me. No, no, no, no.

It's a loving father, whom I'm hurting. I'm hurting by the way I behave, or the way I act in some way. My attitude to somebody, or something, some rude thing that I said to someone.

I remember once in my church, there was something wrong with the audio system, and something went wrong and I thought one young brother who was in charge of it messed up something. And it was an important meeting. And I went to him and said, hey, you've got to be much more careful about these type of things.

And I spoke to him very strongly. And afterwards I realized that it wasn't really his fault. Boy, how did I feel? I went immediately.

He was younger than my youngest son. I went to him and I said, hey, I'm really sorry. That was my fault.

I shouldn't have spoken to you like that. I should have first verified what was the cause. But I was too impatient.

And I'm really sorry. I said, Lord, is there anything that hurts me? Anything that hurts you? And it doesn't just have to be a believer. I remember once, years ago, I probably don't remember, maybe 30, 40 years ago, I was... I went to a bank to get a bank draft to be sent somewhere.

They said, come back at 4 o'clock and we'll have it ready. I went back at 4 o'clock and it wasn't ready. So the manager was standing there in the presence of others and I said, Sir, when the previous manager was here, things are a lot more efficient than right now.

And I walked away and as I walked away, I went outside on the road, the Lord said, go back. You must not speak to an authority in an office like that. Go back and publicly apologize to him.

I didn't even go far. I walked right back. And I said, Sir, I'm sorry for the way I spoke.

It's very important when God speaks to you something that you don't delay. That's humility. You obey immediately.

What does a slave do? The master says something, he doesn't say, well, I think about it. Boy, he dare not. That's the way trade union people say.

My trade union will support me. No, a slave? Okay, Sir. Be quick to judge yourself.

It makes a world of difference in your life. And if you do that and teach other people to do that, you will build a family of God where you are. This is the secret.

The family of God is where we allow the Holy Spirit to immediately show us something and we set it right immediately. I often use the example of a thorn getting into your foot. When a thorn gets into your foot, do you pray about it, whether you should remove it or not? Or how long do you wait till the end of the day? Some people say, confess all your sins at the end of the day.

Do you wait till the end of the day to pull out the thorn from your foot? It's immediate. You said something to hurt your wife. When are you going to apologize for it? Some people after two, three days.

Have you heard of husbands and wives who don't talk to each other for two, three days? The food is on the table, they eat, and they go. That's not the way we should live. Immediate.

Immediately. I am sorry. I shouldn't have said that.

It will take time. This habit of doing things immediately because of one reason. There is such a massive amount of pride in us.

Far more than we think. I want to tell you the only thing that prevents you from going and apologizing to somebody immediately is pride. No other reason.

If you can remember the moment you are proud and as long as you are proud God is your enemy, you will be scared to have pride in you. I want God to be on my side all the time. Who is the one who can say God be for us, who can be against us? Only a humble person.

Because God is not for the proud person. So you are missing a lot if you don't remain in humanity. Remember the puddles of water are always in the lowest place.

The river of God always flows down to the lowest. Who is the one who is going to be filled with the spirit earliest in this group? Whoever is the humblest that God sees. God sees everybody's heart.

The river is flowing and if you are in the lowest place you will get filled first. It is like that. You know there are people who come to me and say Oh brother, please lay your hands on me and I will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I said my empty hands are not going to help you. You humble yourself and the river of God will flow down into your heart immediately without anybody laying hands on your head. A nail pierced hand of Jesus on your head is enough.

So this is new covenant life. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. The secret of Jesus' life is humility, humility, humility.

And so he never sinned. And his father could say I am well pleased with him. You remember at the age of 30? At the baptism? Think of this.

He had never done a miracle, never preached a sermon, never cast out a demon, never had any ministry, what we call ministry zero. And the father says I am well pleased with him. Some of you don't have the ability to cast out demons or heal the sick or even preach a sermon.

Do you think God can say about you I am well pleased with you? Why not? He said that about Jesus before Jesus had any ministry. Some people always have this idea only if I do some ministry for God, if I bring somebody to Christ, then God will be happy with me. Jesus never preached a sermon.

He never did any such thing. And the father said I am well pleased with you. So God's pleasure is not shown on those who have done some great thing for God.

What did Jesus do in those 30 years? He constantly humbled himself, received grace, never sinned. That's all. And if you do that, you may be an unknown person in your church with no ministry, no ability to speak or preach or teach or heal or anything, but you are really judging yourself every day and humbling yourself.

I want to tell you at the end of the day God will say I am well pleased with you. And at the end of your life even though you never preached a sermon in your whole life, God will say I am well pleased with you. It's not by accomplishments.

It's by faithfulness. And then when you die and get before the Lord, He will say well done, good and faithful sermon. You never preached a sermon.

You never healed a sick person. You never cast out a demon. But you did what you could.

Let me show you a contrast in scripture. Another of those things that is in your Bible which you may not have noticed. Matthew chapter 7 and verse 22.

Matthew 7 verse 22. Many that's the important word to note. Not few.

Not some. Many. Many means when you think of the population of the world is billions.

Maybe a few hundred thousand people. Many. A hundred thousand people will come to me on the last day and say Lord, Lord we preached.

We cast out demons. And we performed not one or two miracles. We performed many miracles.

What are they boasting about? Their ministry. Not about their life. Ministry, ministry, ministry.

This is what we did for you. And the Lord says I never knew you. Go to hell.

All of you. Because there was sin in your life. And that means a lot more to me than your healing the sick and casting out demons.

Imagine people who heal the sick. Go to hell. Now I'll show you another group.

On the last day. Not such a big number. Matthew chapter 25.

Matthew 25. Verse 31. The son of man will come in his glory and he will sit on his glorious throne to judge the world.

And he will say verse 34. Matthew 25 Verse 34. To those on his right.

Come you blessed of the father. Inherit the kingdom that is prepared for you people from the foundation of the world. Why? For I was hungry.

You gave me something to eat. I was thirsty. You gave me something to drink.

And many other things like that. And I was sick. The middle of verse 36.

And you did not heal me. You just visited me because you had no gift of healing. Come into heaven.

Have you seen the contrast there? The fellows who healed the sick went to hell and the fellows who had no gift of healing but just visited the sick and encouraged them went to heaven. Okay, you can't heal the sick. Can you visit them? Just encourage them.

It's amazing, I tell you. Man's ways are not God's ways. We think the guy who heals the sick will definitely go to heaven.

And here the Lord says they go to hell. And this other person who just visited and encouraged the sick person, never healed him. Maybe the sick person died.

It's okay. The Lord says you visited me. I'll never forget that.

I like that because the Lord was saying there are ordinary things that you can do just to be good to other people. Maybe you can't heal, maybe you can't preach. But can't you be good to someone? I learned something from that.

I remember once the Lord told me never evaluate yourself by how many sermons you preached, how many books you wrote, how many sermons of yours are on the internet, or how many people have been blessed through your ministry. Never, never, never. That's not the issue.

Examine your life and see how good you have been to people. Have you helped the needy? Have you been good to others around you? Been kind to them? And I sought to follow that rule that I will not evaluate my life by my ministry but by my life. Because I evaluate myself by my ministry, God's given me some gifts.

You may not know it, but the gift of preaching, I know I have it, is something God gave to me when I was 23 years old. I was baptized just two years earlier at 21. It was nothing I achieved.

I was so scared as a young man. I couldn't stand before anybody. I never took part in public speaking in school or even in the military.

But when God anointed me with the Holy Spirit, he gave me the gift of preaching. I was baptized at 21 and at 23 I was preaching to 5000 people. That was not something I produced.

It was a gift. It's like a baby getting a father putting a million dollars into his account. He didn't earn it.

He can't take any credit for it. It was like that. So, I can't take any credit for it.

God can give it to anybody. But goodness, that is a choice of mine. It's a choice of yours.

And that's the thing that God's going to evaluate. He's not going to compare you and me with, say, how many souls did you bring compared to Brother Zach? How many sermons did you preach compared to... How many people did you bless compared to... That's not going to be the question in the final day. It's not a question of how many people I healed.

How many people did I visit and encourage? That puts you and me on the same level. If you choose preaching as a test, then I'm on a higher level than you. If you take healing as a test, maybe I have prayed for some sick people to be healed.

Maybe that puts me on a higher level than you. But, just doing good to others and humbling myself and not getting upset with others, that puts you and me on the same level. That's what God matters in the final day.

This is New Covenant life. In the Old Testament, you see these great men who accomplished great things. Moses, Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, all great, great men.

Fine. In the New Covenant, it's people like this who served others, who visited, who cared, and helped, and in Jesus' name, blessed others. That's the thing that counts.

And every one of us can do that. God bless you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we pray that you will help us to have our priorities right. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/5O45AN-NIOw.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/humility-and-self-judgement/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net