

Humility - the Mark of Growth

by Zac Poonen

True spiritual growth is marked by humility and a willingness to be broken and helpless, as seen in the example of Jesus Christ.

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Scripture: Philippians 2:5

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Humility In Christ"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth through humility, following the example of Jesus who demonstrated humility from birth to death. It highlights the three steps of humility Jesus took: becoming a man, a slave, and ultimately dying on the cross. The speaker challenges listeners to assess their spiritual growth based on their humility and willingness to serve others, even in lowly tasks like washing feet. The ultimate defeat of Satan is seen not in miracles or sermons, but in dying to self, as exemplified by Jesus on the cross.

Transcript

How do we assess whether we have grown spiritually or whether we are growing individually and as a church? As I see it, even in the Old Covenant they never understood it. See, the Old Covenant had these prophets who represented God and mostly they were fiery men like Elijah and John the Baptist. But in the New Covenant it's so different.

Jesus was so different from John the Baptist, the greatest Old Testament prophet. And Jesus manifested his greatness not in a fiery way, like he could be fiery, sometimes he was when he called the Pharisees, you know, a generation of vipers or he made a whip and chased the money changers out. He could do that, but that was to me a very small part of his ministry.

But the main thing I see in Jesus' life is humility, right from birth to death. See, even the fact that he, I don't know how much ancestral lines are important in the United States, but in the part of India where I come from, people are very proud of their ancestral lines, you know, which, where we come from, who were our ancestors. And I think here too a lot of people who boast about their ancestry.

And it's always, it's challenged me that the one person who was born on earth who could choose his ancestry was Jesus Christ. None of us chose it. We were just born into a family and discovered who our ancestors were.

But Jesus, from heaven, before he came to earth, chose a particular line. And I never get tired of mentioning this. You've probably heard me say it before, but I don't mind repeating it.

That in the very first chapter of Matthew, where you read the ancestral line of Jesus, the Jews had the habit of mentioning only men's names. And the Jews are a very male-dominated society. And if they made a genealogy, they would, an ancestry, they would only put men's names.

But in this list of men's names in Matthew chapter one, you read the name of four women. And I was once meditating on that, and I saw some amazing things. So I just want to mention it to you.

The name of the first woman was Tamar, Matthew one, verse three. This is the ancestral line of Jesus. To Judah was born Perez by Tamar.

And the interesting thing is that Tamar was Judah's daughter-in-law. It was incest through which Perez was born. Can you imagine Jesus saying, I want to come through that line? Would you choose such a line? I mean, would you, if your biography was being written, would you like the very first page, the very first paragraph to show that one of your ancestors was born through incest? Even if it was true, you wouldn't want to mention it.

The things like this I see in the Gospels, if you look carefully, which shows that Jesus' whole attitude was so different from ours. There's a verse that's been a very important verse for me that's helped me in my life and in my ministry. And I want to turn to that briefly before coming back to Matthew one.

If you're not familiar with it, it is Matthew 16 and verse 15. The last part of it says, that which is highly esteemed by men is an abomination before God. That means God doesn't care for that which man esteems very highly.

Man esteems intelligence, wealth, many things like this very highly in ancestry and God doesn't care for it at all. And that's one of the things I see right at the beginning of the way Jesus' ancestry is described. One was Tamar, I told you, born out of incest.

The second name mentioned here is the woman. The woman mentioned here is Rehab in Matthew 1.5. Rehab was the most well-known prostitute in the town of Jericho. She was not even an Israelite and she married one of the Israelis through whom Jesus came.

That's another thing, I mean, if in our ancestry there was a prostitute, we certainly wouldn't want that to be mentioned right on page one. And the third woman mentioned here is Ruth. Ruth was from the tribe of Moab.

And Moab was born out of incest when Lot committed incest with his own daughter. That's how Moab was born and from Moab came Ruth. And the fourth woman mentioned here is Bathsheba, who you know was committed adultery with David and David murdered her husband and married her.

So, these are the only four women mentioned in this chapter. I don't know whether you see it as clearly as I do. That, you know, Jesus wanted to show from the beginning that he did not come for the righteous, he came for sinners.

And I find Christians like to show themselves as righteous and I associate only with righteous people. Jesus was known as the friend of sinners. And if we are like Jesus, we will be the friend of sinners.

We will not be sinners ourselves. No, Jesus was the purest person that walked on the earth. Fellowship of sinners could not defile him even slightly.

He was absolutely pure. But he was the friend of the despised and the outcasts of society. And he wanted to win them.

He wanted people to feel that there was nobody so low that they could not be saved. And that's why the Holy Spirit has put this ancestry of Christ there. And it's really humbling.

And any of us who glory in our ancestry or how holy our father was or mother or grandfather or some big shot in our ancestry, you got to read Matthew 1 once again and ask yourself whether you're really following this Jesus or some imaginary Jesus who was a big shot in the world. He wasn't. And remember, this is Almighty God coming to earth as a man.

And he gives us an understanding of what purity really is. Purity has got nothing to do with your grandmother being a prostitute or not. It's got nothing to do with it.

Or whether your great-grandfather was born out of incest. It's got nothing to do with that. Purity is something personal.

And if I'm known as having been born in a bad line, that shouldn't bother me at all. You couldn't choose a worse ancestral line than Jesus chose. We need to understand and see the real Jesus.

And the other thing I see is that he was born in a cow shed. I've never in my life heard of anybody born in a cow shed. Not even the poorest.

I mean, we've got a lot of poor people in India, but I've never heard of any of the poorest of the poor being born in a cow shed. With the cows and the donkeys and they'd find some cleaner place even if they are poor. And I asked myself, why did Jesus choose to be born like that? I mean, his ancestral line was like this and he was born in a cow shed.

Again, it was so that nobody on earth would feel inferior to him. He was the lowest. The world is full of people who want to show in some way that we are smarter, cleverer, and Christian churches holier than others.

And Jesus was the exact opposite of that. The exact opposite. So how shall we assess whether we have grown in these five years? We have to ask ourselves whether we've grown in the humility of Jesus Christ.

I'm not talking about changing our ancestry. We can't do that. But it's that spirit that you see in Christ, which did not want to have anything that the world glories in that he would glory in.

And that's the thing we can ask ourselves. You know, many of us are accomplished, capable. We have achieved things in our life.

It's okay. But if those things have made us feel that we're somebody, we haven't really grown spiritually. We haven't seen Jesus clearly.

I got converted 57 years ago. And one of the things God showed me right from the beginning was that the most important thing in life was to see Jesus more clearly. You know, there's a place in John's Gospel, chapter 12, where it says, towards the end of Jesus' life and ministry, it says in verse 20, that there were

some Greeks who had come to worship at the feast, John 12, verse 20.

And they came to Philip and said, we want to see Jesus. Now, the Greeks were the great philosophers and highly educated people of that time. In fact, Greek was the common language, which even the Romans used.

That's why the New Testament was written in Greek. Even though Rome was the great ruler of the world at that time, Greek was still the language. So, the Greeks were very important people.

And they came to see Jesus. And I don't find Jesus having a great eagerness to go and meet them. Oh, the Greeks have come to see me, is it? Nothing of that.

It didn't bother him one bit, didn't interest him. And it's very interesting when Philip came to tell Jesus that the Greeks had come. He told them, you know, you got to fall into the ground and die.

What a word to give to the Greeks who come to see you. John 12, verse 24. If you fall into the ground and die, there'll be fruit in your life.

Otherwise, you won't have any fruit in your life. All the things that are big and great in the eyes of the world are just a lot of rubbish in God's eyes. The great thing is to fall into the ground and die to all of that.

And then from that broken seed that's lost its beauty and will come forth fruit that lasts. That's a principle of the Christian life that Jesus was speaking there in John 12, 24. And I'm thankful that pretty early in my life, I discovered one thing.

That the greatest thing that I could do for Jesus Christ on earth to show my gratitude to him for dying for me on the cross was not to travel the world and preach the gospel. That's, you know, there's something attractive about that, something which we like to do. I discovered that the greatest thing I can do for Christ on earth is to fall into the ground and die.

To myself, to my reputation, to my name, to my own will, to my own choice. That is the greatest thing I can ever do because that's the way he went. He came to this earth and he died and he told us that if you really want fruit that lasts for eternity, you have to have another type of vision than what most people in the world have and quite another type of vision from what most Christians have.

This is a way that many people won't understand. Jesus called it a narrow way that leads to life and he said very few would find it. It's the way of brokenness and humility, going down, down, down, down, and a way of helplessness.

See, when you read the Gospels like that, okay, we came to Matthew chapter 1. When you go to the next chapter, you see Herod the king, he's a great man at that time, hearing that as a baby born in Bethlehem was going to be the king of the Jews and he feels threatened. Hey, who's this is going to take my throne? And so he orders the soldiers to go and kill every child that's under a certain age so that Jesus would be eliminated. Remember, now this is Almighty God and he, what's the problem for God to eliminate Herod? Not at all.

That's not the way he chooses to protect Jesus. I would have chosen that way, finish that king who's trying to kill my son. That's not the way God chose.

You see something of Jesus as a helpless baby at the mercy of authorities in the world who threaten you. You know, a lot of Christians face, we're going to face that later on in centuries and even now many Christians face authorities in the world who think they have so much power to harm you. So what, how does God protect Jesus? He's a helpless baby and the way God protects him is by telling Joseph and Mary to take him at night and flee to Egypt.

It's a picture of helplessness. Here's a merciless ruler coming to kill me and I'm pretty helpless so my dad and mom have to take me off to another country to protect me. You see, this is how the Gospels begin.

We need to see the real Jesus, the example we have to follow. So often we wonder why God doesn't intervene in behalf of Christians who are being persecuted or troubled and I see God's way is so different. There's a great verse, if you don't know it, it's in Isaiah 55 verse 8 and 9 which says, God says, my ways are not your ways.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. In other words, my way of doing things is not at all the way human beings do things. In fact, the difference is so great.

He says there it's a difference between heaven and earth. And that's something as I've grown in the Christian life I've discovered that God's ways are completely different from man's ways. The way God assesses things and assesses people is very different from the way we do.

And our understanding of even Christian growth is very different from what God would think about it. So, if you really want to know what God thinks about you, you have to allow your mind to be renewed to think like God thinks. And that's not something that happens overnight.

It'll never happen if you don't read the Bible. If you don't value God's word, if you don't study it and meditate on it and allow the Holy Spirit to give you revelation on God's way of thinking, you'll never understand God's way of thinking. And we can live all our earthly life thinking like other human beings think, or thinking like other Christians think, which is also not very often the way God thinks, because most Christians haven't understood God's way.

So, one of the things which I decided, and I'm thankful I decided pretty early in life, was to study Scriptures so thoroughly and to align my mind in line with the way God thinks. So, when I read the Scriptures, I don't read the Scriptures to get a sermon. No, some people do that.

It's okay. There are times when I did it in my younger days, but Paul says, when I've grown up, I put away childish things. It's a childish thing to read the Bible to prepare a sermon.

It's okay when you're a child. But as you grow up, you say that's not God's highest purpose in giving us the Scriptures. I want to see the heart of God when I read the Scriptures.

And the more I read it, the more I understand God's heart and the way God thinks. And I find it so different from the way we think. That's why the Bible says we must allow our mind to be renewed.

You know, so often we want to know God's will in a particular situation. And some of us are very sincere about wanting to know God's will. Whom shall I marry? What job shall I take? Where shall I go? Where shall I live? Where shall I settle down? And most of the time, most people in the world, even most Christians, have made these choices based on what they feel is right.

I feel this is good for me, and I choose it. But Romans 12 verse 2 says, if I want to know the will of God for my life, whether it's a big thing or a small thing, I have to allow my mind to be renewed from being conformed to this world. That's what it says in Romans 12.

Don't be conformed to this world in your way of thinking. But allow God to renew your mind so that you may know his perfect will. So I can't really know his will without allowing my mind to be renewed.

In the Old Testament, it was different. We need to understand that something fundamentally changed when Christ came to the world and established a new covenant. I find most Christians, they still think in old covenant terms.

They don't understand fellowship. They like to hear someone who's like a big prophet getting up and speaking, and that's why you have these mega churches where they like to hear one man speaking. They don't know what it is to have a body ministry where the church is like a human body, where Christ alone is the head and every member is important, and every member has got something to contribute, and no one is greater than the other.

I mean, the very fact that Christian leaders take titles like reverend and right reverend and pastor and apostle and pope or something like that shows they've not understood God's way at all. These are all titles which, you know, compete with Jesus, who's supposed to be the only one who has a title in the body, the head of the body. But people haven't seen that.

To be an ordinary brother to the end of our life, that's the greatest thing. So, there's just one example where our mind is renewed to think the way God thinks. Take the ministry of the Holy Spirit, for example.

There's such a lot of confusion in Christendom today concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but all of that will disappear if I see one thing that the perfect Spirit-filled man was Jesus Christ. He was the most Spirit-filled man that lived on this earth. And if I want to know what fullness of the Spirit is, I've got to just look at the life of Jesus.

You don't have to feel inferior because you didn't speak in tongues. Jesus never spoke in tongues. It's a good gift, and God gives it to some, but you don't have to feel inferior if you don't have it because Jesus didn't have it.

He never did speak in tongues in his entire life. It's people who feel inferior and who want to assert themselves, who try to want to show off some gift they have. When our mind is renewed and God has given us His Word and the example of Jesus, as we begin to think more like Him, we understand what true spiritual growth is, and we discover that it's a growth in humility.

It's a growth in becoming weaker rather than stronger, which is so different from the world's understanding. You read about the mighty Apostle Paul. There was nobody in the first century whom God used more than Paul, and when God decided to use a man, he was not a man of very impressive personality.

The Bible doesn't give us details of his physical appearance, but there are historical records that tell us that Paul was about 4 feet 11 inches tall. I mean, you had to lower this mic quite a bit if Paul was standing here, and he was bald, and he had a hooked nose, and he wasn't a very impressive personality because God didn't want someone who looked like a film star to be His Apostle. That's not God's way.

We admire preachers who look like film stars. We think they add to the dignity of the Christian message a lot of rubbish. Paul wouldn't have qualified.

It just shows how we haven't learned to think like God thinks, and not only his appearance. When God was so eager to continue to use Paul till the end of his life, He never wanted, you know, so many Christians start out so well, and by the end of their life, they've fallen away or lost their effectiveness as they've grown older in the Lord and been more used. They become proud and lose their effectiveness.

God didn't want that to happen to Paul, and it could have happened because when a man is used like the Apostle Paul is used, you know, he raised people from the dead. He'd heal sick. I mean, even his handkerchiefs, if it touched a sick man, the sick man would be healed, and demons would be cast out because Paul's handkerchief was thrown on him.

That was the power of that man. He wrote scripture. He planted churches.

He traveled tirelessly, and he was once caught up to the third heaven into the immediate presence of God and moved around there with the angels and came back. Boy, if that isn't enough to buff a man up. And the interesting thing is, you know, he never told anybody about what he saw there or he heard there, and if you go to a Google search on the people who say they've gone to heaven, it's quite a huge number of people who claim to, I don't believe one of them have gone, but there are thousands who claim to have gone.

I mean, they've got a fertile imagination. I'm not telling you they've got to tell lies. I don't want to say that, but they've got a very fertile imagination.

They imagine that their dreams were real. You know, sometimes we've also had dreams where we really thought we were somewhere else. They thought they were in heaven.

It's a lot of rubbish. The mark of a man who's really gone to heaven and come back is he doesn't talk about it. I see that in the Apostle Paul.

He says 14 years, he never even mentioned that he went there. You read that in 2 Corinthians 12, and he says, I was not permitted to speak in what I heard there. 2 Corinthians 12.4, a man is not permitted to speak what he saw in heaven.

That's the mark of a man who went there. By that one sentence, you can disqualify all these people who are in Christendom today who say they went up there and they come and report what they saw. Just a lot of rubbish.

If you read the scriptures, you won't be deceived by all these people. I'm just trying to protect you from deception. So, when a man had this type of experience, it's so important.

He'd so easily get puffed up. And there's a law of God that doesn't change, whether it's Paul or anybody else, that God opposes proud people. God always supports the humble, but he opposes the proud.

And that means God gets behind a humble man and keeps on pushing him forward endlessly, endlessly. That's spiritual growth. Where God gets behind you and keeps pushing you forward.

And the Bible says God gives his grace to the humble, but he opposes the proud. That means the moment a person becomes proud of anything, it could be his looks, it could be his intelligence, it could be his

spirituality, it could be his Bible knowledge, it could be his experience, it could be his ministry, it could be anything under the sun. The moment he gets a little puffed up about it, God comes in front of him and pushes him back.

I mean, the devil's always already pushing us back and many other things pushing us back. Imagine if Almighty God also joined them and started pushing us back. There's absolutely no hope for us.

That's the reason why many Christians don't grow. I've seen Christians who have sat even in our own churches for many, many years who've heard the same truths from me that many others have heard, and I don't see them growing at all. I see them, I mean, they've increased in knowledge.

They can explain things because they've heard so many great truths in our church, but I can see they haven't grown. They have not grown, which means God's been pushing them back. See, God's either pushing us forward or pushing us back.

If you're a Christian, there are only two possibilities. Either God's pushing you forward consistently or He's pushing you back. There's no such thing as standing still in the Christian life.

I've discovered that through these 57 years. There is no such thing as standing still in Christian life. You're either going forward or going back.

So, if you're not moving forward, whether you know it or not, you're moving back. And there's only one reason why God turns around and pushes a man back, and that's pride. And so, God never wanted to do that to Paul, and the only way He found to keep Paul humble was by giving him a sickness.

Which father would like to give sickness to his child? I don't think there's any father in the world who would ever want to give his child a child's sickness. God would give his children, a father would give his children healing. Jesus said, if earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, how much more will your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him? What I learned from that verse is that the best father in the world is evil compared to God.

The best father in the world is evil compared to God. He may be very good compared to other earthly fathers, but compared to God's goodness, he's evil. It's like saying the brightest star at night disappears when the sun comes.

I mean, it's still there, but you don't see it. The brightest star, because the sun's brightness just blots it out. So that's what I see, that the goodness of God is so great that the best father on earth disappears as evil.

And such a good God gave a sickness to his greatest servant, the apostle Paul. Paul called it a thorn in his flesh. It's in the same chapter, 2 Corinthians 12.

And he says the reason as well. He says, to keep me from exalting myself, God gave me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me. It wasn't a good thing, humanly speaking.

I mean, if something is a messenger of Satan, we would assume that, oh, definitely, in the name of Jesus, we just rebuke it and cast it out and God would remove it. If something came into your life from Satan, wouldn't you be absolutely certain that God would remove it? Well, here's a messenger of Satan that harassed Paul, and God didn't remove it. You've got to understand God's ways.

You see, we can have a fixed teaching, anything of Satan, God will remove it. Well, he didn't remove it here, which teaches us that we haven't understood God's ways. God allows Satan to exist because he's fulfilling a purpose through him.

He certainly fulfilled a purpose in Paul's life through Satan. A messenger of Satan to buffet him, again, twice in that sentence, he says this phrase, to keep me from exalting myself, to keep me from exalting myself, 2 Corinthians 12, 7. Have you understood the importance of God doing something in your life to keep you from exalting yourself? If you have, you've understood something of God's ways, because that is God's way of being able to support you, continuously keep pushing you forward and never getting the other side and pushing you back, because that's the law of God. It's like the law of gravity, you know, and the law of gravity just keeps pulling you down all the time.

If you go up to the roof, and you jump down, the law of gravity doesn't first check up, is this a wholehearted Christian or not? It makes no difference whether you're the most carnal person on earth or a wholehearted Christian, the law of gravity operates in the same way. So, the law of God is like that. I'm opposed to the proud, and God doesn't have to check up, is this a wholehearted Christian who's getting proud or an unbeliever getting proud? It doesn't make a difference, it's like the law of gravity.

He does not have to check up whether the person jumping off the roof is a wholehearted Christian or an unbeliever. It pulls down everything, and God is opposed to the proud, it doesn't matter who he is, it doesn't matter if he's the most useful servant of God on earth, where are you and I then? You think God won't oppose you? I tell you he will. And it doesn't matter which church you belong to, and it doesn't matter how much God's used you in the past.

If the Apostle Paul, I mean, when I see the way that guy lived, I feel like a pygmy compared to him, and that man was in danger of exalting himself. That was a grace to recognize that. Most of us don't even recognize it.

So we're talking about spiritual growth. How do we know whether we've grown spiritually? As a church, as individuals, if you've got light, then God does things to keep us from exalting ourselves. And in this case, it was a sickness, and he prayed for it naturally, you know, he says, God's a loving father, something which looks evil to me from a human standpoint.

I say, Lord, remove it. We always do that. Every time you're sick, I believe you should pray for healing.

Absolutely right. Any sickness, I've always prayed for healing whenever I'm sick. Paul prayed for healing.

But he didn't get it. He prayed again, prayed again. And finally got a word from God, I'm not going to heal you.

Because I want to give you my grace. And God gives us grace only to the humble. And so he says, I want to give you my grace, and that'll be more than enough for you.

But in order for you to get my grace, I have to keep you humble, and this sickness will keep you humble. And then he says, my power is perfected, 2 Corinthians 12, in weakness. So, there are very few Christians who understand the importance of being weak.

Weakness is not something that most Christians would glory in. Most Christians glory in accomplishment and power and manifestations of power. But Paul was so different.

He had understood God's ways. And in chapter 13, he says, verse 4, Christ was crucified because of weakness. Wasn't it weakness that Almighty God could not protect his son from Roman soldiers, capturing him, nailing him? And it's like a helpless criminal.

Jesus was crucified, and Almighty God apparently couldn't do anything. All these men getting at Jesus and killing him. But it says here, he was crucified because of weakness.

You know, he said in the Garden of Gethsemane when Peter, his loyal disciple, took out the sword to fight for Christ, to protect him from the Roman soldiers coming to capture him, and swiped, and I think he was aiming for Judas Iscariot's head. He was a fisherman, and he missed and he chopped off somebody's ear. And Jesus immediately picked up that ear and healed that soldier who came to capture him.

Just by the way, I have a feeling that soldier got converted. I cannot imagine a soldier's ear being cut off when he come to capture Jesus, and Jesus picking up that ear and putting it back, and that man not being transformed. I mean, if I put myself in that place and I said, boy, who is this guy I've come to capture and kill? And he heals me.

This thing must be genuine. And you know, so I believe I'll see that Roman soldier in heaven. And I think in heaven, you know who he had to thank? Peter.

Thank you for swiping and cutting my ear. I got saved, man, because of that. It's amazing how God's ways are.

These little, little things excite me when I read the Scriptures. You know, the Holy Spirit shows us what's written between the lines. Do you ever read what's written between the lines in Scripture? Little things the Holy Spirit shows you, that the wonderful way God works, which is so different from our human ways.

He converts a soldier by Peter's mistake, etc. But what I see there is a helplessness, and Jesus turned around and tell Peter, you don't know how to do that, Peter. One word from me, 10,000 angels will come.

Or whatever number, six legions, 72,000 angels could come. And protect me right now. I'm not going to call them.

I'm weak. He made himself weak. He would not call 72,000 angels to come and defend him.

Because humility in a man here to fulfill God's will, and he was crucified because of weakness. Yet he lives because of the power of God. God raised him from the dead.

And Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13, for we also are weak in him, but we shall live by the power of God. This is one of the great mysteries of the Christian life, that God can manifest his power through us only in the measure in which we recognize our utter weakness. Through many years of preaching, I've been preaching for 53 years.

I first started preaching when I was 23 years old. It wasn't my ability. I was a very shy type of young man.

But God supernaturally anointed me, gave me the gift of preaching when I was 23. And I've been preaching ever since. But in this 53 years experience, doesn't give me any boldness when I get into the pulpit.

I'll tell you honestly, I feel very weak. Because it's not like in human situations where you're, if you're very eloquent, and you're very well versed in a subject, you can get up anywhere and talk on it. So, here, in serving God, we're not trying to explain a doctrine or explain a teaching.

We're trying to meet people's needs. And how in the world can I meet the needs of so many people who are so diverse needs, if I think I'm clever and I'm capable? I mean, I can impress them with my Bible knowledge, but that doesn't solve their problem. My aim is not to impress people with Bible knowledge.

My aim is to help them spiritually, so they become more Christ-like and are more drawn closer to God. How in the world can I draw all of you closer to God? Why am I impressing you with my eloquence? That's stupidity. And yet, that's what many preachers try to do.

I hear many Christian preachers, good preachers, all you can get from them is just, wow, what an eloquent man. It doesn't help a lot of people to come closer to God. So, in order to speak, and I want to say that to all of you who share God's word, even if it's for five minutes, if you really want to speak effectively, ask God to make you weak and give you a sense of your ignorance and your helplessness, even if you have 53 years of experience like me, that you cannot meet people's needs by your experience and your ability and your knowledge.

It's by weakness. See, man can't understand that. It's by stumbling, broken speech that God does His work, not by great eloquence.

Because if it is with great eloquence, a man will get the credit. And a true servant of God tries his best to hide himself so that Jesus Christ gets all the credit and so that people are not drawn to him but drawn to Christ. See, the best preacher is like a signpost who says, that direction, Christ is there.

So, they're drawn to him. So, Paul had to be made weak, and that's why God gave him a sickness. And if you can understand these things, what is spiritual growth? Spiritual growth is becoming a little weaker, becoming a little smaller in the eyes of others, becoming a little more despised because people discovered that in your ancestry there was incest and prostitutes.

Great. Do you ever feel disturbed that something happened that made people think less of you? Did you get excited when you heard that? Wow, they think less of me now. Or did it disturb you? Oh, no.

Because of that thing, they now think less of me. Brother, sister, that's the best possible thing that could have happened to you, if you can understand it. God's ways are not our ways.

He says, my ways are higher than the heaven and the earth. I mean, if your aim in life is to glorify Christ, if your aim is to exalt yourself, oh, then you go the way of the world. But the church is not meant to be a place where we exalt ourselves.

It's a place where we glorify Jesus Christ. Our life and our home is also meant to glorify Christ. So, that's why God allows many things in our life which we can't understand.

When we look at Jesus' life in Philippians, in chapter 2, it says in verse 5, have this attitude in yourself, which is in Christ Jesus. So, I've often said that with that one verse, you can live your whole Christian life. One verse.

You don't need another verse in the Bible. If you lose your Bible, and you remember there's one verse. Have the same attitude in you that Jesus had towards people.

Look at women the way Jesus looked at women with total purity. Look at money and material things the way Jesus looked at it, not in the grabbing, possessive way. And God gives us money and material things to bless others, not for us to just hoard and take care of ourselves, to bless others.

And to look at our enemies the way Jesus looked at them, people to be loved. And have the same attitude in everything that Jesus had towards opposition to what we call disappointments, things that didn't work out the way we expected. Have the same attitude that Jesus had.

That's a great verse. Have this attitude in you, which is in Christ Jesus. And I believe we should be constantly examining ourselves in the light of that verse.

Do I have the same attitude that Jesus had in this situation, that situation? You know, when there's road rage, when traffic is held up. Great verse to remember. Have this attitude in you that Jesus had.

And it goes on to say three steps. He was God, and he didn't hold on to that, but became a man. I mean, that itself is a tremendous step of humility for God to become a man, even if he became an emperor on earth.

If Jesus had come as an emperor on earth, that would have been a tremendous step of humility. But when he became a man, it says second step was, he became a slave. That was a second step further down in humility, where he always took the position of a slave.

I see him at the beginning of his ministry in the marriage in Cana, and there was no wine. And where was Jesus? Have you noticed that? He was found among the servants. That's where Mary found him and said, they don't have any wine.

So he was among the servants who were serving there, and he told them, go and fill these water pots with water and turn them into wine. Okay, that's how he began this ministry. What do you see him at the end of his life? At the end of his life, you see him at the Last Supper.

You know, in the Jewish homes, they always had slaves, the rich people had slaves who would wash your feet as soon as you come through the door, because you know, they didn't wear shoes those days, they wear sandals. And I wear sandals in India all the time. And I know how walking in the dusty roads and all, your feet get really dirty.

It's because of the heat that we don't wear shoes so much. We wear sandals. And so it's so refreshing to have to wash, to put your feet under a tap or something and wash off all that dirt.

And they didn't have taps those days. So they had this slave who would have a bucket of water. And all the guests when they come in, he'd take off their sandals and refresh them by cleaning up their feet.

So here at the Last Supper, Jesus had told the owner of that house, I don't want anybody there, because it's a private party I'm having with my disciples. But the bucket of water was there. And all these disciples come with their dusty feet.

They see the bucket of water and walk past it and go to the table. Everybody's an important man, you know, Matthew is the chartered accountant, Peter is the leader, and John is the relative of the high priest.

They're not going to do that lowly task.

So as they look around, Jesus says, I seem to be the only one here who's a nobody. He picked up the bucket of water and goes around to each person's and washes their feet. So I see the beginning of his ministry with the servants in Cana, at the end of his life, doing the job of the slave.

That's a tremendous challenge that Jesus finished his ministry at the feet of his disciples washing away the dirt from their feet. And if anyone wants to progress in the Christian life, that's the way. The way up is down.

To go down, down, down, down. To be a slave. He came as a man, and then he took the second step, being a slave, not just an ordinary man.

That is how we assess spiritual growth. Have we begun to think of ourselves like that? Then you're going in the right direction, then you're growing, then you're growing as an individual, you're growing as a church. And so many people, when they come to the end of their earthly life in Christian ministry, they are you know, directors or chairman, and at the end of many years of Christian ministry, they've gone right up to the top of the ladder.

But for Jesus, it was so different. At the end of his life, he was washing the disciples' feet, and a true disciple of Jesus will say that, Lord, help me to end my days as you did. At the feet of your children, washing their feet.

That's where I want to be found at the end of my life. Serving others, doing the lowly tasks, never feeling that I'm somebody, that other people should respect me or any such thing. But doing something lowly, I see my, even my ministry of preaching as washing people's feet.

That's how I look at it. There's a lot of dirt among God's children, and I want to wash it off. And if I can wash it off with God's Word, I can do it.

It says that in Ephesians 5, verse 26, it's a great verse, that Jesus sanctifies the church. He loved the church, verse 25, and gave himself up for her, Ephesians 5, 25. And verse 26 says, he sanctifies or makes the church holy, cleansing the church by the washing of water with the Word of God.

And that's the picture of Jesus taking water to wash the disciples' feet. And here it says, it's a picture of our using God's Word to cleanse people. So, all preaching ministry must go by this rule.

I'm not here to present a great sermon to impress people. No. That's the way of the world.

I'm here to follow Jesus, who takes the Word and uses it like water to wash the disciples' feet. That's real spiritual ministry. So, whether you speak for three minutes or one hour, wash people's feet with the Word of God.

I mean, that's not a very impressive thing to see a servant, a slave, just washing people's feet. And so, this whole business of preaching, you know, in Bible colleges, they teach people how to preach and how to change your voice and all this rubbish. I mean, is there a technique to wash people's feet? You got to humble yourself, that's all.

And anybody can do it. Is there anybody who says, I can't wash people's feet? And if you've got a heart for the Lord and you love Jesus, God will always give you something to share, even if it's two minutes. But

you can wash people with the Word.

And I don't mean just in the church. You know, some people have a lust to get up in the church and share something from the pulpit. Such people are proud.

I'm not saying it's wrong. But if the same person doesn't have a great desire to share a word with somebody who comes visiting him in his home, or sharing a word when he writes an email, or sharing a word when he's speaking on the cell phone, you don't get much honor when you share a word over the cell phone or in an email like you if you preach in a church. I'd be just as happy to share the word at home or when I'm speaking on the phone or in the email, because it's a question of getting the dirt off people's feet.

That's Jesus' ministry, washing water by the Word. I'm just trying to show you, this is the attitude of Jesus. And the more you have this attitude, the more you know you've grown spiritually.

Otherwise, we have not grown. So, He first came from God to man. That's humility.

And then from man, He became a slave. That's humility. And then the third step, Ephesians Philippians 2 verse 8, it says, He went down, He humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross.

In other words, what's lower than a slave? A criminal, a wretched criminal who deserved, who's lower than a slave. Romans didn't crucify their slaves, they crucified criminals, because these are not fit to live. Ordinary criminals were put in jail for a few years, but the really bad ones were crucified.

And I've heard that, you know, the various ways in which people killed criminals through the years, crucifixion was one of the worst. And the Romans discovered that. And someone said, Jesus waited till man discovered the worst possible way of killing someone and came at that time, because He wanted to be lower than everybody else.

He waited until the Romans discovered crucifixion to be the most humiliating, the worst way to kill somebody. Then Jesus said, now it's time for me to go down to earth, because I can now be under everybody. See, the electric chair and all is a very dignified way of dying, even hanging.

But crucifixion is terrible. He took the place of a criminal. So I see Jesus became a man and then a slave and like a criminal.

So that's why I say the three secrets of the Christian life are humility, humility, humility. Those are the three secrets of the Christian life. If you've understood it, you've understood Christianity.

If you haven't seen it, whatever else you may know of Christianity, you haven't understood the truth. That's the way of growth. God became man, He became a slave, He became like a criminal.

He went underneath everybody. Born in a cow shed, lower than everybody else, crucified in a way more humiliating than anybody else. He's always trying to go underneath people, not above them.

This is how we know that we are growing spiritually. How God is working in our life. We're becoming more Christlike.

Everybody wants to be Christlike, but they don't understand what it means. They think Christlike is going and serving the poor and giving money for missionary work and all that. You can do all that and be

arrogant as anything.

Humility, humility, humility. And that's how Jesus lived on earth. And that's how, you know, if you read through the Gospels, you find so many examples of this, of the way Jesus lived, you know, where He was always thinking of how He could be, for example, unknown.

For example, He'd heal a sick person and tell don't tell anybody that I did that. So different from the people who claim to have the gift of healing today. So completely different.

And I'm amazed that Christians can't see that, can't see the hoax of today's healings. I mean, is that the type, is that the way Jesus healed the sick where you get the videographer to come and make sure he's videoing this whole event? What is the healing? Somebody who could had lost 80% hearing, now it's 60%. That's the type of healing they talk about today.

And they want the guy to testify to that in front of the mic. What surprises me is not the deception of these healers, but the stupidity of the millions who sit there and watch it with their mouth open and send money to this man. It amazes me.

They haven't seen Jesus at all. This is not Jesus. It's got nothing to do with the ministry of Jesus Christ, even though a lot of people claim we're doing the things that Jesus did.

Rubbish. So what is spiritual growth in a world where people have not seen the real Jesus? We need to manifest Christ in our life. And like I always say, it begins at home.

If your wife can't see that spirit in you of lowliness and never wanting to lord it over others, then you're a failure. Just to show it in the church is play acting. To show others in the church that, oh, I've got a spirit of service is acting.

At home, we don't act. At home, we are ourselves. And that's the place where you know whether you want to have the attitude of Christ, of lowliness, of being willing to be considered weak.

Jesus was the greatest authority that ever walked on the earth, but he says he was crucified in weakness. Isaiah 53 says he was despised and rejected by men. And that's the way for us to walk.

And through that, the mighty power of God was manifested. It's always interested me that the Bible says Satan was defeated, not when Jesus cast out demons. Jesus probably cast out hundreds of demons, but Satan was not defeated.

You know, you can cast out a demon. Satan is not defeated. There are people who cast out demons, who find the Lord will say, I never even knew you.

Go to hell. Go and join those demons in hell whom you cast out. Imagine that.

Jesus defeated Satan, not when he cast out demons. It says in Hebrews 2, in verse 14, through death, he made powerless Satan who had the power of death. Hebrews 2, 14.

And we read in Philippians 2 that that death on the cross was the ultimate proof of his humility. He fell into the ground and died, and he calls us to go the same way. So that's something that really impressed my heart, that you don't defeat Satan by casting out a demon.

You defeat Satan when you die with Christ, when you can say, I'm crucified with Christ. That's why Satan was defeated on the cross. And that's why it's the message of the cross in the believer's life that's most hated by Satan, and which Satan has succeeded in eliminating almost completely from Christendom today.

And if you go to YouTube, try and find out how many messages preach the cross, how many preachers preach the cross. Go to churches and see how many preachers preach the cross. Not even 1%.

Satan has done a fantastic work in eliminating the message of the cross from Christendom, the message of death to self. I am crucified with Christ. Reckon yourself dead to sin, because then he's defeated.

He's not defeated by sermons. Jesus did not defeat Satan by preaching great sermons. He didn't defeat Satan at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

That's probably the greatest sermon ever preached, and Satan was not defeated. You think a great sermon will defeat Satan? Not at all. He healed thousands of people.

Satan was not defeated. He raised the dead. Satan was not defeated.

He cast out demons. Satan was not defeated. But when he died, it says he made him powerless, Hebrews 2.14. That is where he defeated Satan, and that's where Satan's power was taken away, and he's shown the way for us to overcome Satan as well.

If I'm crucified with Christ, Satan will have no power over me. Satan's not afraid of people who shout and yell and scream and cast out demons and heal the sick, but boys, he's scared of a humble man, because a humble man has something which Satan doesn't have. Satan's saturated with pride.

That's how he became the devil, from head to foot, and the only person he fears is a genuinely humble man or woman, and if you're a genuinely humble man or woman in God's eyes, Satan will be scared of you. I'll tell you that, and you'll have authority over him, and I believe God wants us to live on earth in such a way that the devil's afraid of you, because it says in 1 John 4 17, as Jesus is, so are we in this world, and wherever Jesus went, Satan was scared of him. I've taken that as a goal in my life.

I don't know about you. 1 John 4 17 is such a blessed verse to me. We made a big plaque and put it up in our church building.

As Jesus is, so are we in this world. That means the way Jesus walked around on this earth, that's the way we're supposed to walk around, and the devil's scared of us wherever we go. But the only person he's scared of is a genuinely humble man who has totally died to himself, who has no ambition on earth, who's died to people's opinions and died to his own choices.

He's got nothing to live for except the will of God. Satan's mortally scared of such a man, and I tell you, if you're a man or a woman like that, boy, Satan will be scared of you, but he'll do everything possible to prevent you from becoming a man or woman like that. He'll do everything possible to make you think that Christianity is certain a lot of other things, being zealous for this, that, and the other, doing social work or something like that.

He doesn't mind any amount of social work so long as his power over men continues. So, how shall we evaluate our spiritual growth? How much have you followed Jesus in his humility? That is the test. So, I

hope these words of mine would have some permanent effect in our lives.

God bless you all. Thank you.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Qfx9Jwy577U.mp4>

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