

New Birth and Growth Thereafter

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being born again of the spirit, not just being born into a good church environment or living a morally upright life. It warns against assuming spiritual rebirth and highlights the need for genuine self-examination and humility. The message stresses the significance of discerning true spiritual growth, the necessity of being born anew through the Word of God, and the continuous growth in grace through humility, following the example of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 2:5, Hebrews 7:25, James 1:17, Romans 12:3, Philippians 2:9

Topics: "Spiritual Rebirth", "Humility in Growth"

Description

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Transcript

I want to share a few matters in relation to spiritual growth. You know, the Bible says how we are born again, and that's compared to physical birth. It's like a person is born into the world.

We need to have an experience of being born of the spirit. See, John's gospel chapter 3, Jesus said, unless you are born again, verse 3, John 3.3, you will not see the kingdom of God. And then he compares being born again to the physical birth.

He says in verse 6, you're born of the flesh, that's physical birth, and then born of the spirit. So it's very important for everyone. Sometimes we can assume when we come to a good church that, you know, we're behaving properly and not committing any great crimes, and then among a lot of good people, and we can assume that we are born of the spirit.

But I'll tell you, after watching CFC churches for nearly 45 years, there are many people who sit in a CFC church for years and imagine they are born of the spirit and they're not. And it's quite likely there could be some people like that right here. I don't know all of you, but when I go by the law of averages, there must be some here who imagine they are born again, and they're not.

It's a language, you know, people say about being born again. But Jesus spoke it's as very definite as being born of the flesh and born of the spirit. I mean, you know when a baby is born physically, it's just as real to be born of the Holy Spirit.

And there are many evidences of it. For example, when a baby is born into this world, it comes into a world which it had never seen. It was all cooped up inside the mother's womb for nine months, never seen anything, was all dark, and then all of a sudden it comes into another world, which if that baby could express itself as wow, I never knew there was a world like this.

I thought all the world was this dark space inside my mother's womb where I could hardly move. And I want to ask each one of you, I'll tell you why, because I believe the Lord will ask me whether I did my best to make sure that you understand what it is to be born of the spirit. Otherwise I'm responsible.

Now if I have made it clear, then you're responsible. But it's a very serious thing I want to say to you. And through the years in talking to many, many hundreds and thousands of people, every spiritual leader, not only me, develops what we call discernment.

Discernment is knowing things about a person. I don't mean their secret life or anything. God never reveals that to anyone.

But to not be fooled by a person's spiritual language, not to be fooled by pious words, religious words that people speak. I can say that through the years it has become essential for me to be able to discern who is just speaking religious language and who is in touch with the Lord. You can know all about the theory of light and have no light at all in your house.

You can explain it. I'll have it. So this is very, very important that you have a clear witness, not from man, not that you convince everybody in this church that you're born again or born of the spirit.

That is fit for the trash can. For years I have taught the opinions of men are fit for the trash can. You know that every person in this church can think you're born again and you can still go to hell.

Because in the final day to be discovered you were not. You were just resting on your opinions of everybody who thinks so. They think I'm a good brother and nobody questions me.

He's sad if nobody questions him. I sometimes tell people directly. I've had to tell people who have even come to my church in Bangalore for many years.

I say, my dear friend, I want to tell you you're not born again. Think about it. See in my own life, I know from my own life how though I was born in a Christian family and I or my father always sent me to a church that preached about being born again.

I went to a Sunday school where from childhood I heard the gospel. But I was not born again till I was 19 and a half. What new thing did I learn at 19 and a half which I did not know for the previous 19 and a half years? Nothing.

I read the Bible every day. I remember my parents taught me never to get out of bed before kneeling down and saying our father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name the lord's prayer. I never killed anybody.

I never committed adultery and never stole a bank or never did anything which people call evil. But I was not saved. I was not born again.

I never went to a worldly church. I always went to churches that preach the new birth but I was not born again. So I know from my own experience there is a world of difference between being born in the flesh and being a good person, being born of the spirit.

God is not making nice people but new men and women. So I want to ask you, have you been born anew? Born of the spirit as genuinely and really as one day you were born others weren't. You know there are two stories here.

In John 3, Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus who was like a bishop or I would say an archbishop. He was a rabbi. He was a leader of the Jews.

It says he was in verse one a ruler, spiritual ruler. He wasn't a criminal. He wasn't a man who was living an immoral life.

He was living a very upright life and he knew the bible so well, the old testament. And what does Jesus tell him? You must be born again otherwise you'll never see the kingdom of God. I know Nicodemus you go to synagogue every Saturday and you're not doing anything evil but you are not born again.

And to another woman, to another woman in John chapter 4, the next chapter who is the exact opposite of this archbishop Nicodemus, she's a woman who's lived in sin. Married five times and divorced and now sleeping with someone who's not even her husband, her sixth partner. You would think that is the person who needs to be born again.

That's the person to whom Jesus said should say you must be born again. But no, he doesn't say that to her. What he tells her is, woman, John 4 21, I want to tell you about worship, about worshiping God in the spirit.

That's the whole verse 21 to 24. Now if you were asked who should be taught about worshiping in the spirit and who should to be taught about being born again, you would say this woman needs to be taught about being born again and this Nicodemus archbishop should be taught about worship. God's ways are not our ways.

A lot of people who look very religious in God's eyes are worse than this five times divorced woman because they are so cocksure. God will definitely accept me because I'm such a good person. Whereas this woman had no crazy idea that she was good.

She knew she was a sinner and I think that is the reason why some people never come to a genuine experience of new birth because they've never had a time when they really felt they were good for nothing sinners. I want to ask you my dear brothers and sisters, have you had such a time in your life where you felt you were absolutely rotten good for nothing sinner? I'll tell you honestly I've had many such times in my life even after being born again, even after being filled with the Holy Spirit. For me that is one of the marks of spiritual growth that you come closer to God and you become more and more aware of sin in your life.

You grow just like children go from first grade to second grade to third grade. They learn something new. They learn something new in mathematics.

They learn something new in science. They learn something new in literature. It's a growth in the same way a truly born-again person will grow in the knowledge of sin in his life.

If you're not growing in that knowledge I want to request you lovingly seriously get before God and ask yourself whether you're really born of the Spirit or not. See Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1 that we are born again verse 23 1 Peter 1 23 by the living word of God. All of us became human beings through a living seed in our mother's womb.

That seed produced you and me. He says the word of God is like that living seed. 1 Peter 1 23 born again through the living word of God.

That means not just academic knowledge of the scriptures. The pharisees knew the scriptures much better than Peter, James and John. Much better.

If you had a scripture test competition between the pharisees and Peter, John, James and John, the pharisees would have defeated them outright. Peter, James and John didn't know the Bible like the pharisees. But the pharisees were on their way to hell.

Peter and James and John were on their way to the kingdom of not only on the way to the kingdom of God. Instruments in God's hands to lead others into God's kingdom. So what is it just your knowledge of the Bible only proves that you're a good pharisee.

You're a good person like Nicodemus. Jesus would say you must be born again. You must be born from above and my dear brothers this is so important.

I don't know why the Lord has laid it on my heart. It must be for a few people sitting here who for years have sat in some church and gone to some church that never really told you that you need to be born of the spirit and you know it. It's like that baby comes out of the mother's womb and this is an amazing world.

It's all cooped up. It's something like that happened in your life. I'm not talking about physical experiences or tingling down your spine.

No, no, no, no. But spiritually it's as it were your eyes of your heart were open that you say, hey I see something now which I never knew before. That is God giving light in the heart.

So that is being born again. Let me show you another verse in 2nd Corinthians in chapter 4. 2nd Corinthians chapter 4. He compares this new birth. You know Christ, we say about Christ coming into our heart.

Christ comes into our heart through the Holy Spirit. When I ask Jesus Christ to come into my heart, you know who comes in? The Holy Spirit. And depending on the measure of how much I yield to him, that determines how filled with the Holy Spirit I am.

But it's the Holy Spirit that comes in. And here it says in 2nd Corinthians 4, he gives the example of Genesis 1 when the whole world was covered with darkness because the highest angel became the devil. That's how the world was covered with darkness.

And God created the world. God never creates darkness. Never.

God is a light. And the people who say that God created the world in six days, it's a lot of garbage. Never written in the Bible.

Another thing which may surprise you, God created the world in a moment. Genesis 1 verse 1. In the beginning God created the heaven and earth. And that's explained also in Hebrews 11.

We read it sometimes. God suddenly made a perfect world. And some people say, but when God created it, it was all dark.

God never creates anything dark. It was shapeless. God never creates anything shapeless.

It's empty. God never creates anything empty. How is the world dark, shapeless, empty? Because in James 1 it says in verse 17, every perfect gift comes from the Father of lights.

There's nothing imperfect that ever came from his hand. Then what are those six days mentioned in Genesis chapter 1? Those who carelessly read the Bible, read that God created the earth in six days. You read the Bible carefully in Genesis chapter 1, and you'll find the word created is never used there.

It's always made, made, made, made. Even when the Lord told the Israelites in Exodus, you must keep the seventh day holy because the Lord made the earth in six days and rested the seventh day. Not created.

A lot of people get upset when I say God did not create the earth in six days. He created in a moment. He remade it in six days.

It's true. Read the Bible exactly, otherwise you can believe some crazy things. I believe that all people who go astray because they place more opinion on the word of some man than the word of God.

I love the story written in Acts 17 of the Berean Christians. Those are the people in Berea. They were noble.

Read that sometime in Acts 17. Because when the apostle Paul preached in the synagogue, let me paraphrase it, they went up to Saint Paul and said, great Paul, good to listen to you, but we don't believe everything you said. We'll check into the scriptures and come back to you next week and tell you whether we believe it or not.

Wonderful people. Even the apostle Paul, we're not going to take it from you unless you show it to us in the word of God. They went home, went to the synagogue every day because there were no printed Bibles those days, and searched the scriptures, and came back next week and told Paul, yeah Paul, now we believe it.

If all Christians were like that, never go astray. But you can have such a respect for a man that you don't even consider whether it's scripture or not. I'll give you one classic example.

You know it's a very common thing for many preachers to print out invitations asking people to give them money. I saw this invitation from a well-known preacher in India who wrote, you're invited to give at this particular address or whatever it is, money, and he quoted a verse from Matthew chapter 10. He who gives to a prophet will receive a prophet's reward.

Matthew 10, 44 or something like that. Now that sounds so similar to what is written there, but it's not the truth. As soon as I read it, I knew that's not what Jesus said.

Jesus said he who receives a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, not he who gives to a prophet. He said he who gives a cup of cold water, but you can mix up the two and confuse the thing in order to get some money. He who gives to a prophet will receive a prophet's reward.

I don't know whether many of you caught it when I said it. That is not scripture. I still kept that pamphlet with me to show how people are fooled by when they don't compare scripture to scripture.

Why do we read letters to the Corinthians? Because there was something wrong there Paul had to correct. Why did you had to write to the Colossians? There were things wrong there he had to correct. Why did you write to the Thessalonians? There was something wrong there.

By understanding the Lord's coming, he had to correct. He had to correct things to the Philippians also. There were two sisters there fighting with each other.

Galatians, they were under the law. He had to correct them. Why is there no letter to the Bereans? Can I tell you why? Because they never believed anybody without checking the scriptures.

If you are a person who will never believe any preacher except he can show it to you from scripture, you will never go astray. That's why I always try to keep on quoting scripture. You know I've seen many preachers in my life who quote one scripture in the beginning and then close the Bible and then air their own thoughts for the next half an hour.

Well, you listen to all that, you'll go astray. If you want to find out that, just go to YouTube and listen to all the sermons there. Not all of them, but listen to some of them and just ask yourself one question.

How many preachers are constantly quoting the Word of God on YouTube? And how many preachers are just quoting one verse and then going on airing themselves and you sit there with your open mouth and believe it? That's the way to go astray. Be like the Bible says, they were noble. So, anyway, I was just saying about God made the earth perfect, created it rather perfect, and the angel, highest angel became the devil and immediately, just like the world was, earth was cursed when Adam sinned, the earth suddenly became, like it says in Genesis 1-2, dark, empty, and lost its shape.

And here, Paul compares that to how we, by the effect of sin, have become dark, empty, and lost the image of God. Just like Genesis 1-2. But we read in the next verse, Genesis 1-3, God said, let there be light.

And that is compared here to being born again. See 2 Corinthians 4. First of all, we are dark. 2 Corinthians 4. The God of this world has blinded our minds.

But then, God, verse 6, who said way back in the beginning, light must shine out of the darkness is the one who has shone in our hearts. That's the new birth. And given us the light for the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

So, he's comparing that light coming into darkness in Genesis chapter 1 to the new birth. Now, you know the difference between light and darkness. You go into a room and you know immediately, you don't need 10 seconds, you don't even need one second to find out is there light in this room or not.

It's something like that happens when you're born again. It's like a dark room suddenly getting light. It's not a question being born in a good Christian family and living a good Christian life.

A lot of people who live so-called good Christian lives are in hell today. They're in hell today because you cannot enter the kingdom of God unless you are born of the Holy Spirit. I hope I've created enough doubt in your mind today that you will earnestly seek God and get an assurance from Him and not from any man or from any leader in this church that you're a child of God.

Get it from God. A certificate that you get from man has absolutely no value in God's kingdom. I really know the difference that happened in my life when I was born again.

Suddenly, a lot of values changed in my life. It was like that in a moment, though many, many times I had said, Lord come into my heart. I think I must have said that a hundred times from the age of 13 to 19, but I was not born again.

I know what happened when I was born again. The next day, I was just reading John 6.37 one day, him that cometh to me I'll never cast out. I said, Lord, I've come to you a hundred times.

Lord said, I didn't cast you out. I said, Lord, I believe it today, and I was born again. No shaking, nothing, but something changed and I know it changed because the next day I was working in the naval base and some of my fellow officers, colleagues, came to me the next day and said, hey Zach, let's go to the movie that is here in the naval base, had its own special movie theater, and I suddenly found no more interest to go to the movies, particularly all these filthy ones, but how could I say no to them? And I was the one who took them to the movies in the olden days.

I could not say to them, hey, I'm a Christian now. They said, we thought you were a Christian all along. I didn't have the courage.

I was born again, but I didn't have the courage to stand up to my friends. Don't go for those things now. But as I was walking to the movie theater, I was crying in my heart, Lord, somehow deliver me from this.

I've got to get out of this situation. I don't want to go. I don't have the courage to tell these people no.

We walked and walked and walked with this cry in my heart. These two friends of mine wondering why I'm so silent today, and we came to the movie theater, and there was a big notice out there. Believe it or not, we did not receive the reel for the movie today, so the movie is canceled.

Wow! I was so excited, and they were wondering how I suddenly became so happy when they were feeling so miserable. This is absolute truth. That was the day God showed me what He would do.

I really wanted to honor Him. But when I came home to my room, the Lord said, I won't do that for you next time. You have to stand up yourself and say no to them, otherwise you'll never grow spiritually.

I had to grow. So the first time I was, God carried me. Next time, God said, you got to walk now.

But I was so encouraged by that one experience. I said, sure, now I know. God's on my side.

Have you had experiences like that? That God shows He's your father. He's your dad. I don't mean that you got a promotion or some earthly benefit.

Some people, the only thing they can think of is God gave me a promotion or gave me some money or allowed me to build a house. It's all earthly, nothing spiritual. Born of the Spirit means spiritual reality has become more important.

Like God who said, let light shine out of the darkness, shone in our hearts in the light of the knowledge, the glory of God in the face of Christ. It's the difference between light and darkness. And coming back to 1 Peter 1, it says here, an expression, which is another thing which many people don't know.

After being born again, we thought about being born again through the Word of God in 1 Peter 1.23. Then it goes on to say, now that you're born again, chapter 2, verse 1, now you got to do something. This is not something God will do for you. Don't ask God to do for you what He asked you to do yourself.

It's like a little child, you know, the mother carries it for a while and then says, hey, you got to learn to walk. Never mind if you stumble and fall a few times. Put the left leg forward and the right leg forward and keep going.

Mommy's not going to keep on holding their legs and make the child walk. It'll never learn to walk that way. He says, you, now that you're born again, chapter 2, verse 1, you put aside all malice.

Malice is sort of a strong word for hatred. You have some strong hatred against somebody who maybe did some evil to you or harmed your family or your children or some boss who made life miserable for you. Malice.

Put it away. Don't ask God to do it. You put it aside.

All deceit, like Ananias and Sapphira pretending to be spiritual. You put it away. And all hypocrisy.

That is pretending to be very spiritual when you're not. Using spiritual language to fool people. Pharisees were like that.

Hypocrisy. Number one sin that Jesus detested and condemned. Envy.

You put aside all envy. Feeling jealous of somebody who's better than you or more spiritual than you or who has more money than you or has got a better house than you. Put it aside.

Otherwise you're proving that you're not really having the Holy Spirit's conviction. You may battle with something, but if you're not even convicted about sin, I would question how is it the whole, you say you're born in the spirit and you're not convicted about these sins. You're not convicted about feeling jealous of somebody.

Envy that person. Put it aside. It may take you time, but at least you're convicted and you know it's wrong.

And put aside all slander. This is something which many Christians don't take seriously. Speaking evil of others.

Jesus is called the great intercessor. He intercedes. That means praise on behalf of all his children.

Hebrews 7.25 is a great verse. He ever lives to make intercession for his children. I don't have time to show you those verses, but look it up sometime.

Hebrews 7.25. Jesus ever lives. He's living 24 hours a day to pray for his children. And Revelation 12.10 says there's somebody else who's doing something else 24 hours a day that is accusing God's children.

That's the devil. So here are two ministries. Devil.

Jesus always praying for God's children. The devil always accusing God's children. That is slander.

In fact, the word for devil in the Greek is diabolos, which means slanderer. The actual meaning in the Greek language, if it was translated, is not devil but slanderer. That's what he is.

One who speaks evil of God's people. But you know the devil's got a lot of human beings who help him in that ministry of slandering others. Are you holding hands with Satan there? Put away all slander.

And then like newborn babes, having put aside all this, here's something else that babies must do. All babies drink milk from their mother. Drink the pure milk of the Word of God.

I remember a Christian who was born again in one of these dead denominations. I won't mention the name. He was really born again, but he was a member of this dead denomination that didn't even preach the new birth.

But somehow he got converted reading a tract or something, and he was reading his Bible in his house one day when the priest of his denomination came to see him. He said, what are you doing? He said, well reverend, I'm reading the Bible. He says, oh no, you shouldn't read the Bible.

But he said, sir, it says here, or father or whatever you call him, it says here that I must desire the pure milk of the Word of God. And he said, that's right. But God has appointed us priests as the milkmen to give you this milk.

You can't take it yourself. That was a clever argument. So this man said, well sir, for many years I used to get milk through a milkman.

This must have been in India. He says, but he always had water in the milk. It was never pure milk.

Happens all the time in India, by the way. So I decided to buy a cow, and I get pure milk now. And that's what was happening to me when I was sitting in your denomination.

I always get this watered down message, which was never the pure milk of the Word of God. So I decided to go to the Bible directly now. What is the result of this? You will grow.

If you go straight to the Word, you will grow. And it says here, you will grow up to salvation. Have you ever thought of growing up to salvation? Many people say, I'm already saved.

Hang on. Salvation has got three tenses, like we study in English. Past, present, future.

Salvation in the past is salvation from the guilt of sin. I don't have any guilt feeling now. The blood of Jesus has cleansed me from all guilt of my past sin.

That's past tense. Present tense is salvation from the presence of sin. Sorry, not present.

From the power of sin. In the future is from the presence of sin. Salvation from the penalty of sin.

That's over. Salvation from the power of sin. That's present tense.

Are you experiencing that? It says here, growing up in respect to salvation. That is being saved from the power of sin, which is like the power of gravity will pull you down any part of the world. And you know, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, if I were to use an example, is like these rockets that go up into space.

And if you study geography, you know, there's a space around the earth, a few hundred miles, you know, a certain number of miles of which the earth has pulls everything down by the pull of gravity. But there's a point at which the pull of the earth is no longer there. And so this rocket is struggling, struggling, struggling against gravity.

And as soon as it reaches that point, it doesn't need any more push. It's just shooting off on its own. The speed of that rocket suddenly increases to an amazing speed because it's gone beyond the pull of earth.

It's a wonderful thing, the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what it does. You know, just like I said, when you are born again, it's almost like a new world.

I found the same thing when God filled me with the Holy Spirit. It is another experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. I was born again.

I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's another thing I find. A lot of people, they think they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

I don't know. I'm not talking about speaking in tongues or getting shivers in your body. No, no, no.

I'll tell you what happened to me. When I was filled with the Holy Spirit, I suddenly became aware of the spirit world, more aware of the spirit world. I was not afraid of demons anymore.

I was not afraid of the devil anymore. The spirit assured me that Christ had conquered, and I also became part of a conqueror in Christ over these demons. I didn't have these fearful dreams anymore.

Even as a born-again Christian, I had some sometimes fearful dreams, scared, but it went. I mean, you get into another realm. It's like shooting out of the power of sin.

Now, if you don't keep going, you can sink back and backslide into the pool of gravity again, like many believers have fallen, but if you keep going, you grow up to salvation. So there's a growing up to salvation till one day, past, present, saved from the penalty of sin, past tense, saved from the power of sin, and one day when Christ comes back, I'll be saved from the very presence of sin. Sin will not even be able to tempt me.

Sin tempts me today. The day will come when I'll be saved from the presence of sin. So that's growing up to salvation from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and one day from the presence of sin.

But until that day comes, we must keep on getting saved from the power of sin, like this rocket, battling, battling, battling, battling against gravity, and one day just shoots off outside the power of gravity, and boy, the speed increases 100 times more than what it was down here. Dear brothers and sisters, there's a growing up to salvation. There's a being born again, and there's been growing up to salvation, and that growth comes through grace.

There is a power in the New Testament, which is not there in the Old Testament, called grace. Grace is a power, like the power that shoots the rocket up, and it's one of the definitions of grace that's found in 2 Corinthians 12. Some people think grace is just, oh, God just overlooks all your sins.

Okay, never mind my child. It doesn't matter if you sin. That's a wrong understanding of grace.

2 Corinthians 12, when Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble, imagine such a great mighty man of God was in danger of pride. I tell you, if there's anybody sitting here who thinks that you're not in danger of pride, go and read that passage. The great apostle Paul was in danger of pride.

Where do you think you and I are? I read that passage, and I say, Lord, I'm absolutely convinced that I'm in danger of pride every single day of my life till you come again. I want to watch out on it. If Paul was in danger of pride towards the end of his life, where are you and I? And it says here in 2 Corinthians 12, 7, to prevent me from exalting myself.

I was given a little sickness, a thorn in the flesh, and I said, Paul, you were in danger of exalting yourself. You who preached about the humility of Christ and following Christ, you were in danger of exalting yourself over other believers. He'd say, yes, my brother, I have a flesh in which there's nothing good, and even sometimes unconsciously, I may try to exalt myself over others and not know it.

But the moment I do that, I lose the grace of God, because God gives grace only to the humble. And God did not want me to lose his grace for a single moment. So what did he do? The only way I can humble this man is give him a sickness.

Now, Jesus did not need a sickness to remain humble. He did not need anything like that. He was humble because he was wholehearted, radical.

But I want to say, even the apostle Paul was not as radical as Jesus. He needed a sickness to remain humble. And you and I sometimes need a little help like that to remain humble.

I'll tell you that. Sometimes when something like that happens, just say, thank you, Lord, that was your thorn for me to keep me humble. It says here very clearly, verse 7, to keep me from exalting myself.

And what was this gift that God gave him? It says here in verse 7, the last part, a messenger of Satan to trouble me, trouble me, trouble me, trouble me, trouble me. Say, Lord, take it away. No, this is to keep you humble, Paul.

Once he understood that, he was excited. What was the Lord's word to him? Verse 9, the Lord said to me, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you to overcome any thorn in the flesh, any calamity, any problem, to come out triumphant over that. My grace is enough for you because my power.

See how grace equals power? Grace equals the power of God. Here it is. Because that grace is my power which will come to you when you're weak.

Like the Living Bible paraphrases it, God says, my power shows up best in weak people. And if God's power is not being manifest in you, my brother, my sister, it's because you don't recognize your weakness. That's all.

I have come to see in my own life, the more I recognize my own weakness, spiritual weakness, I mean, the more I experience God's grace and God's power, the more I recognize my own inability to preach, which you think I don't have. You think I have no problem preaching. Well, the moment I begin to think like that, I'll bore everybody to death.

But the more I recognize my inability to preach God's word in the way it should be preached, the more I recognize my weakness. God says, my power will be made perfect in your weakness. God's ways are so

different.

Those who humble themselves will be exalted. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled. And I've seen that happen again and again and again in the churches that I have responsibility for.

I've seen people who humble themselves keep on humbling themselves and God exalting them. I've seen other brothers and sisters who seek to exalt themselves, who want to promote themselves. I've seen God pushing them down.

I want to say to your parents, please teach your children not to exalt themselves unless you want God to keep on pushing them down spiritually. You can exalt yourself in the political world. You can exalt yourself in the business world.

You can exalt yourself in the religious world. But God will humble you because he humbles the proud. And if you want your children to get grace from God continuously till Jesus comes, I'll tell you, teach them humility.

You heard my oft-repeated saying, three secrets of the Christian life are humility, humility, humility. Because then you'll get grace, grace, upon grace. So he says, I'm going to boast, verse 9, in my weakness because then the power, the grace of God will rest upon me.

That is how we grow up. We grow in grace. It's a lovely expression, grow in grace.

But how will it happen? Only if you keep on humbling yourself. If you ask God to give you light, he'll show you new ways in which you have to go down in the eyes of others. Go down in your own eyes and till you sink to become a zero in your own eyes.

And God will be able to exalt you continuously. And if you remain a zero, there'll be no end to what God can do through your life. But I've seen wonderful young people in CFC churches.

In the beginning they accepted that message. As God blessed them and as they got recognition in the church, their head began to swell and swell and swell and swell. They began to think they are somebody.

They went right down. And they can't even see. The worst part is they can't even see.

It's like this rocket that's crashing down to earth and it doesn't even realize it's going the wrong direction. I've seen believers like that. They think they're going up, going down, and they don't even realize it.

Grow up to salvation means what? Growing humility. Okay, one last verse. Philippians chapter 2. In everything, Jesus Christ is our example.

So how do we grow up to salvation? By going down in the footsteps of Jesus. Philippians in chapter 2, verse 5, have the same attitude or mind in you that Jesus had. Isn't that a good example? Look at Jesus and see the mind he had.

Here are the three secrets of the Christian life. Humility, humility, humility. It's not my invention.

It's the Holy Spirit's. Number one, verse six. As God, he became a man.

First step of humility. Now you'd think that is enough. For God to become man is such a tremendous drop.

No. Second step. As a man, verse seven, he became a slave, not a servant.

A servant can get wages. A slave. Slave was the lowest level of humanity almost in those days.

Like the caste system in India. You don't even despise them. Low caste.

Slaves were the lowest. They were never paid. They were treated like furniture.

You could destroy furniture. You could kill people. They were treated like furniture.

You could kill a slave. It's not a crime. Slave.

Jesus became a slave. First step. God became man.

Humility. As a man, he became a slave. And you say, boy, he's reached the bottom.

No. One more step. Verse eight.

He humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross as a criminal. Criminals were worse than slaves. Jesus was not a criminal, but he was treated like a criminal.

The Romans crucified only the worst criminals. The others they put in prison. But the guy was really bad.

They said, this guy doesn't deserve prison. He deserves to be crucified. So here he was.

God became man. As a man, he became a slave. And he went further down and was willing to be considered as a criminal, even though he's not a criminal.

And that was the lowest point. That's why we glory in the cross. Everybody talks about the cross.

They haven't understood it. All these people who hang golden crosses around their necks, they don't have a clue what a cross is. It means being treated like a criminal.

That was clear in the Roman age. And because of that, it says in verse seven, for this reason God highly exalted him and gave him a name which is above every name. At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Question. Why did God exalt Jesus after he died? And he will say, because he was a son of God. No, sir.

Because he humbled himself to the lowest point any human being could ever humble himself. Therefore, he's exalted to the highest position as a man. Every knee will bow to him.

And those who follow in Jesus' footsteps of humility, humility, humility. God will do the same for him like we sing in that song. What he did for Jesus, he will do for you.

We grow up to salvation.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/8-xo9-9Uau0.mp4>

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