

New Year Message 1 of 4 : Recognize How Big God Is

by Zac Poonen

To make progress in our spiritual lives, we must recognize God's bigness and be small in our own eyes, comparing ourselves to God and not to others.

Duration: 55:52

Scripture: Philippians 4:11

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being content and having a humble perspective before God. It highlights the need to be Christ-like, focusing on spiritual growth rather than worldly gains. The speaker encourages being content in all circumstances, learning from the examples of Paul and Jesus, and seeking to be renewed daily in Christ. The message stresses the significance of being small in our own eyes, pursuing a life free from grumbling, and having a heavenly perspective in all aspects of life.

Transcript

In the world, when people come to the end of a year, whether it's in school or in a job, they look for some type of benefit that they should get. Children look for a promotion to the next class. And those who work in offices look for an increment in their salary or their bonus or a bonus.

And they are disappointed when they don't get it. What should we look for when we have lived a whole year claiming to be believers, not just nominal Christians, but born-again believers? What is the mark of God's blessing upon our life this year? What is the bonus that we expect? What is the increment? What is the promotion? Let's look at this very familiar verse. It's one of my favorites.

You've probably heard it many times from me. Proverbs 4 and verse 18. The path of the righteous is like the shining light, like the light of dawn.

It shines brighter and brighter until the full day. When we are born again, it's like sunrise. And then as the sun climbs the sky, the day gets brighter and brighter with every hour until the full day is when Christ returns.

And in the message translation it says, the ways of right living people glow with light. The longer they live, the brighter they shine. But the road of the wicked gets darker and darker.

And so the light we read from the Gospels, John chapter 1, is the life of Jesus. So the way to evaluate ourselves at the end of the year is to see whether we have become more Christ-like this year, not whether you earned a bigger salary or got a bigger job. Those are the things that people in the world rejoice in.

If you got it, it's not something to be very excited about if you have not become more like Christ. I've noticed that when we get excited about worldly gains and benefit, it tends to make us weaker in our passion to become more Christ-like. If you find God has blessed your family, maybe some of your children have got jobs this year or got married, these are the things that excite you, then we're living as earth dwellers.

We're not living with a heavenly perspective. There's nothing wrong in being happy about these things. But they can become so big in our eyes that the real values of eternity disappear.

You need to answer this question honestly to yourself. What is the thing that's really excited you about this year as you look back? I'll tell you honestly about myself. I haven't got any increase in salary.

I didn't get any bonus. But I have got more light on un-Christ-like areas in my life that I never knew for 70 years. God's blessed me so that I could get rid of them and allow the Holy Spirit to take over in those areas.

And I'll tell you something. If you go this way, you'll be very happy when you stand before the Lord because that's the way God wants you to live. That's why he saved you.

Let me show you a passage I was thinking of today in Mark's Gospel, Chapter 10, in this connection. This is the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, Mark, Chapter 10, and said to him in verse 17, Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said in verse 19, You know the commandments. And he gave him the commandments.

And he said, I've kept all of these, verse 20. Then look at this word. It's a lovely word.

Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him. Isn't it wonderful to think that Jesus looks at us and loves us this morning? A lot of us can rejoice in that. God loves me.

When Jesus loved this man, what did he tell him? He said, Out of love for you, I want to tell you something. There's still one thing you lack. There were so many areas in his life he had already obeyed God.

He was a God-fearing man. He could say, From my childhood, I've kept these commandments. How many of you can say that from your childhood, you've kept even one of those commandments? Jesus said, Honor your father and mother.

I think there are less than .001% of children of believers who can say that they have kept that commandment to honor their father and mother. This young fellow had. He's better than all of those.

I've kept it from childhood. I've honored my father and mother. I've never stolen.

I've never borne false witness. Jesus says, I love you, and I want you to be a little more godly. There's one thing you lack.

Jesus loves us. He shows us what we lack. And he says, Go and sell all that you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

Come and follow me. Earlier on, you know, Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? Verse 18. No one is good but God.

Now, one of the ways in which we can look at that is very difficult to interpret that verse. Jesus knew he was God. I think he was testing him.

You call me good. There is no one perfectly good, perfectly good, except God. So do you really accept me as God? That's the question.

That is the question. Do you really accept me as God? I think all of us sitting here would say, I accept Jesus as God. Well, Jesus said, If I'm God, let me tell you what you should do.

Go and sell all that you possess and give to the poor, and come and follow me. But he was sad, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned so much property. It would have been easy for him if he had little, but he had a lot.

Some of us sitting here will acknowledge, it was easier for us to follow the Lord when we had little. Today we have much. It's a little more difficult to respond to his call to follow me.

It was easier for us to spend time in prayer and seek God when we had little. But today we have much. And it's difficult.

It's always difficult when we have much. When that becomes something to us. And Jesus looking around said to his disciples, How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.

Those words are eternally true. It's very difficult for those who are wealthy to enter God's kingdom. He didn't say it's impossible.

He said it's hard. It's harder. Wealthy in any way.

Wealthy is a comparative statement. You know that down in the poorest villages in India, if you have a bicycle, you're wealthy. Or if you have a scooter, you're really rich.

And boy, if you have a car, you're extremely wealthy. It's a relative thing. And to be wealthy means to feel ourselves superior to others in some area.

I have more than others. That poor guy who's got a bicycle in the village has got more than the others who don't have a bicycle. So whenever I feel I have more than others around here, I'm pretty.

I'm spiritual. I'm a little more than others. It's very difficult to enter God's kingdom.

It could be anything. Whenever we have more than others, it tends to make us proud in some area. It's not that rich people can't enter God's kingdom.

Rich people around the world tend to be proud. They were not proud when they had nothing. But when they made a lot of money, they became proud.

You could be rich in intelligence. Intelligent people are also very proud. It's very difficult to find a really intelligent man who is humble.

I mean, poor illiterate people, they're humble. But someone who's smart and clever, who's accomplished something, it's very difficult for him to consider himself as no better than the others. They're rich.

And that richness prevents them from entering God's kingdom, prevents them from possessing more and more of God's kingdom. And could that be the reason why we didn't make as much progress this year as we could have? There are many things God can give back to us. He can give us money if you have lost it.

Your reputation, you can get back a job. Health, if you've lost health, you can get it back. There's one thing God can never give back to you.

Even Almighty God cannot give something back to you. And that is time. If you have wasted this year, 2010, I'll tell you, God can never give it back to you.

He can give you 2011, but he can't give you 2010. That is impossible. If it's wasted, it's wasted.

If you played the fool, that's gone. If you didn't pursue after becoming more Christ-like, you're going to have some loss eternally. Some wealth that you could have had in all eternity, you will never get now.

Sorry to let you know that, but you'll never get it. Because you wasted 2010. But you don't have to waste 2011.

Christ hasn't come yet. You can still get some wealth, not as much as you would have got if you had been faithful this year. But you can make sure you don't make the same blunder next year.

When I say these things, I often remind you of the words of Jesus. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Life is short, I'll tell you that.

When you stand before the Lord, you'll discover a lot of things you thought were so important were not so important. A lot of things that you thought you should spend your time pursuing were not so important. It was more important to fulfill God's purpose for your life.

And that is to be a witness for Christ by the way you lived, by your uprightness, by the way your family lived, and the way you cared for others to share what God gave you with them. And then Jesus said, the disciples were amazed at these words. You know, when they heard this, they said, how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter God's kingdom.

Jesus went on to say, it is easier, verse 25, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Do you believe the words of Jesus? A lot of us say, like the rich man, good teacher. Jesus says, only God is good.

Do you really believe I am God? Do you really believe that I mean what I'm saying here? That it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God? They were even more astonished. Now, what would you think? Do you think these disciples who heard it were very wealthy people? I don't think so. I think many of them were very poor, relatively speaking, compared to the other rich people in Israel.

So when Jesus said, it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, they would have sat back and said, that's great, we're not among that number. Like many of us sitting here would say, oh, thank God, I'm not so rich. That's where the disciples were different from you.

Even though the disciples were poorer than, I would say, 99% of people sitting here, do you know what their attitude was? There's something godly I see there. They didn't say, oh, well, thank God, we're not rich, we're poor. You know, a lot of us like to think we're poor.

I'll tell you, you're not. I'm not. And neither are you.

I don't know anybody in CFC who's poor. A lot of you imagine that you're poor, but you're not. I'm talking about in terms of money.

There was a time, maybe, when some of you were poor, and I know that, but not today. But the disciples said, oh, then who's going to be saved? I wonder if we'll be saved. These poor people consider themselves, hey, we've got a lot more than blind Bartimaeus and some of these other guys.

See, they compared themselves with blind Bartimaeus and the beggars sitting on the road. We compare ourselves with the wealthy. That was the difference.

And they said, hey, we're rich. I mean, blind Bartimaeus is poor, but not us. We're rich.

Do you compare yourself with the beggars in Bangalore? I don't think so. When you say you're poor, you compare yourself with people who are wealthy. And that's the difference.

The disciples said, hey, that includes us then. It's difficult for us to be saved. And it's when we recognize that that we can really be saved.

But if we are dishonest and we have this false humility which makes us think we are poor, we're just trying to fool ourselves and fool other people, we will not be saved. And then Jesus said, this is impossible with men, but with God it's possible. What is possible? Verse 25, he said, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom.

What an extreme. Jesus was a great master at exaggeration. You know, when people hear me sometimes speak, saying that you've got to get up a million miles away from that person or something like that, they say, you can't be a million miles away from that person because the diameter of the earth is only 40,000 kilometers.

How do you get a million miles away? But Jesus used exaggeration. Camel going through the eye of a needle, a beam in your eye, a log inside your eye, straining out a mosquito from a cup of tea. He was a master at exaggeration.

And that's where I learned it from him. What did he mean by this? He's taking this huge camel, he didn't say a cat or a dog, a camel. It's because he's so big.

Whereas, you've heard me say this, the smallest thing in nature is an amoeba, which is so small, you've got to see it under a powerful microscope. That can go, you know these little bugs, for example, that we get in the flu and all, they're so small. Somebody sneezes and it's there, these little, little things that can get in.

Those are so small, they can go through the eye of a needle so easily. They can run in and out of the eye of the needle. But the camel finds so difficult, that little amoeba finds so easy.

Those little bacteria, they find it so easy to go through the eye of a needle because they're small. So what Jesus was saying is, when you are small in your own eyes, it's very easy to enter God's kingdom. But it's very difficult to remain small in our own eyes.

It's easy to be small in our own eyes the first time we come to Christ. Think of the day, the first day you came to Christ or the first day you came to this church when you were a nobody. Nobody knew you.

You were thankful if even one person came and greeted you at the end of the meeting. You were a nobody. But as time has gone on, God has blessed you and you have become a somebody in the church.

You expect people to know your name because you're an important person. Do you ever feel insulted if you've given your name to somebody 20 times and he asks you the 21st time, what's your name? That's a pretty good test of whether you're small in your own eyes or you're pretty big in your own eyes. What do you mean? I've told you my name 20 times.

Don't you know who I am? There's a lot of bigness in us brothers and sisters and that's why we don't progress in spiritual things. God gives his grace to the humble. The poor in spirit possess God's kingdom.

You see, the thing is when we come to the Lord initially or we come to the church initially, we're like that little amoeba. We can flip in and out of the eye of a needle very easily and we progress. That's why a lot of people make a lot of progress in the early days of their conversion.

It's like getting 100% in kindergarten. First standard, you got 100%. Great.

But then as you went on, your grades fell. You're getting 10%, 5% now. What's the reason? In the kingdom of God, the reason is we grow big.

We don't remain that size anymore because now God's blessed us. We know more than that other person. God's used us to bless somebody.

God's used us to do something for someone. I see that with some of our brothers who have become elders in some churches, some of our churches. They suddenly begin to think they're somebody just because they became an elder.

You don't become spiritual just because you become an elder. And what is worse, the elder's wife, she thinks she's somebody too. Nobody selected her.

A lot of elders' wives are very carnal. But they think they're spiritual because my husband's an elder. They're ready to give advice to so many people.

Nobody wants their advice so they give it. It's all a sign of bigness. The amoeba has become a camel.

Then they don't go through the eye of the needle anymore and they can't progress. My dear brothers and sisters, that is the only reason why we did not make more progress this year. That's the only reason why you still grumble and complain about something or the other even though you've heard about it for that we should be free from it for 25 years.

That's the only reason you lose your temper and get angry because you're big. Big people can't go through this eye of the needle. Small people go through very easily.

So I want to urge you in this coming year to reduce your size. This is an important area like all these foolish girls who eat little in order to become slim to have that perfect figure. That's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about being small because God is so big. That's the thing. We must always compare ourselves with God like all the stupid people in the world comparing themselves with each other.

Somebody once asked me, Brother Zak, it's not good to use the word stupid. It's not good manners. I said, what to do when they are stupid? What shall we call them? The most stupid man in the world is the one who compares himself with other people.

The wise person is the one who compares himself with God and sees that he's nothing, he's a nobody. So that's what he was telling this rich young ruler. Only God is good.

You called me good just now. Do you really believe I'm God? Do you really believe I'm God? Do you believe that I'm God? Then you must be nobody, right? Well, God is telling you nobody. Go and sell all that you have.

And he says, sorry. That's a big man who tells God, sorry, I can't do what you say. You wouldn't do that to your boss in your office.

You ever turn around to your boss in your office and say, sorry, I can't do what you say. Well, that'll be your last day in the office. But this man turns around to the one whom he calls God and says, sorry, I can't do that.

Now I want to ask you, my dear brothers and sisters, is there anything you have read in Scripture where you have literally told God, sorry, I can't do that. I know it's there, but I'm going to take my time to do it. That's a big person.

It's a small person. He does something immediately. Almighty God has said it.

I've got to do it. But most Christians don't do it. So what if most Christians don't do it? They're all big in their own eyes.

The mark of your recognizing that God is almighty. It's all wonderful to sing here on Sunday morning, God is so big and God is so great and clap our hands and all that. But if you really believe God is big and great, you will see yourself as nothing, as a nobody.

It is impossible to be proud. I say impossible for a man who has seen the bigness of God. It's impossible for a man to consider himself superior to others if he has seen the bigness of God.

He will always be nothing in his own eyes. And he will make fantastic progress, not only year by year, but day by day. Think of how it was with the Apostle Paul.

He says in 2 Corinthians 4, 2 Corinthians in chapter 4, verse 16. You know, the first verse, let's look at the first verse. There's an expression that Paul uses here saying, we do not lose heart.

In today's language, we don't get discouraged. Isn't it good to know how never to get discouraged? Paul knew that. He says, we don't lose heart.

We don't get discouraged. Even though there are crooked preachers all around us, he's comparing himself with some of them in chapter 2 and here. He says, we don't do those things hidden because of shame.

We don't walk in craftiness, adulterating the word of God like other people. No. In the midst of so many crooked preachers who are getting on making a lot of money and fame and all that, Paul says, well, I'm not like that, but I don't get discouraged.

Again, he says in verse 16, we don't get discouraged. When a man says within the short space of one chapter twice, I don't get discouraged. It means he was being tempted to be discouraged.

We're all tempted to be discouraged. Every human being is tempted by people, circumstances and so many things in the world to be discouraged. But there are some Christians who never get discouraged.

It's true. And the reason he says we don't get discouraged is because he says, even though my outer man is decaying, that means my physical body is getting weaker and weaker and weaker. My brain cells, you know, the scientists say that there are thousands of brain cells that die every day.

But we've got billions of them, so we keep going. But we're getting weaker, whether we know it or not. Our body is gradually getting weaker and weaker and weaker.

He says, but our inner man is being renewed not once a year, every single day. Boy, I remember when I read that, I said, Lord, that's the way I want to live. I don't want to just get a promotion once a year.

I want every single day to be a little more Christ-like than I was yesterday. I mean, you may be happy with once a year. That's up to you.

But I find Paul's life is a tremendous challenge to me. Every day a little more Christ-like. And I'll tell you, if you're married, the best person to tell you whether you're becoming more Christ-like every day is your wife or your husband.

Ask him. Ask her. They'll tell you the truth, whether you're becoming more Christ-like, more gracious, more humble, more pure, more free from the love of money, more free from the pursuit of earthly things which are all going to evaporate when Christ comes again, and more pursuing the things that last for all eternity, seeking to build God's church, seeking to be a blessing to others and to serve and help them.

I want to be renewed every day. And if there are problems, he says, yeah, every day we have problems. Paul had his problems too, but he calls it a momentary light affliction.

He says, that's okay. It's only for a short time, maybe a hundred years at the most, just a short time compared to eternity. How many of you believe what the Bible says, that a thousand years is like one day? Even if you live a hundred years, it's just like two and a half hours.

Are you willing to go through a little struggle for two and a half hours in order to have a glory for thousands of years? Look at all these students who work so hard to get into some prestigious college. People who work, I know the people who struggle and struggle and struggle to get a visa to go to some other country where they can make more money. Look at the amount of effort they put into it.

Think if we put that much effort into becoming spiritual, we'd have a glory. You know, the things you want, you really struggle for. Think how hard you try when you don't have a job and you're applying for a job and you're trying here, trying there, going for interviews here and there.

If you worked so hard to become spiritual, I tell you, all of us would have been more spiritual by today. If you had worked just as hard to become spiritual as you work to make money or to find a better house to live in or a better job, you'd be far more spiritual than you are. The thing is, we have not made God, God.

We have not said, Lord, you are the one person that I want to live for. Those are the things we need to correct as we enter into a new year. Our inner man is being renewed day by day and those who pursue this way, let me tell you, they don't get discouraged.

We don't lose heart. We don't lose heart because our inner man is being renewed day by day. If you get discouraged, it's because your inner man is not being renewed.

It could be. It won't be renewed unless you pursue it. Can you think of anything in your life that you didn't get without pursuing it? If you pursue it, you'll get it and you'll find you're free from discouragement.

I know I pursued it because I was such a terribly depressed, discouraged person for many years after being born again and being baptized. Probably worse than many of you. But it's gone.

It's gone from my life for so many years I can't even remember the last time I was discouraged. More than 25 years ago perhaps. It's gone because I pursued.

I said, Lord, I want to be renewed every day. Every day. I don't think I've succeeded getting there yet, but it's my goal that every day it'll get better, more Christ-like.

Pursue it, my brothers and sisters. You won't lack. Don't think that, oh, I won't get enough money if I don't pursue it.

God will give you enough to take care of you. I can tell you that after being a believer for 50 years. He will always give you enough even when you don't pursue it.

But you have to be content with what God gives you. That's the problem. There's another great secret in Paul's life.

Why he was renewed every day is found in Philippians chapter 4. See, when we acknowledge God as God we're just small little teeny-weeny nobodies compared to Almighty God. Then we learn to be content with what God has given us. Do you know that the first two sins in this universe that we read of in the Bible I don't know if the devil committed many other sins before Adam was created.

Probably he did, but I don't know what they are. But I know the Bible describes the sin of the highest of the angels. We don't know his name.

They call him Lucifer, but that's not his name. We know he sinned, became the devil. And we know that Adam sinned and became the devil.

Those are the first two sins mentioned in the Bible. Let me tell you the similarity of those two sins. The highest of the angels did not partake of some tree.

But there's one similarity between let's call him Lucifer and Adam. It was being not content with what God had given. That was their sin.

God had given this angel perfect beauty perfect wisdom, high position higher than everybody else. He was still not content. He said, I want more.

I want more than what God has given me, even though he got so much even though he's got so much more than everybody else. Oh, I want more. And he became the devil.

Don't ever forget that. Read in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, the story of his life. He became the devil because he was not content with what God had given him, the position and the beauty and everything.

When you're not content with your looks, you look into the mirror and you're not happy with the color of skin God gave you. Or you're not happy with your looks or your appearance or your job. I'll tell you, you're on the road to becoming like the devil.

You are, whether you never heard it, you'll hear things from this pulpit that you'll never hear anywhere else. You're on the road to becoming like the devil because he was also not content with what God had made him. Even though God has done so much for us, we can be discontent with what God has given us.

Paul said, I have learned Philippians 4 I have learned, verse 11, to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I have learned to be content. He unlearned.

He wasn't born like that. We're not, when we're babies, we're not content with anything. We always want what our parents tell us not to have.

We're discontent. We're born like the devil, discontent. Then we become Christians.

But we still got this spirit of the devil in our flesh of being discontent. We're discontent with the job, discontent with the wife we got or the husband we got. Even though you chose him yourself or chose her yourself, after a while you get a bit discontented.

It's all because we are so big in our own eyes. We think I deserve somebody far better. I'm not just an ordinary person.

I deserve someone far better. Then there comes discontent. The same thing with Adam and Eve.

It was the same sin. God sent them into a garden where there were, I don't know, maybe a hundred thousand trees with all types of fruit. I mean, think of all the fruits you have eaten.

So many things were in that garden. Imagine, and it's all free. The most beautiful, it was paradise on earth.

And they were not content. They wanted to reach out to the one thing God said, there's only one thing I want you not to do. I hear a ten thousand trees you can eat from, but don't eat from that one tree.

They were not content. I know God has given us ten thousand trees, but I want that one also. It's the same spirit of the devil that poison that he put into Eve.

And that poison has come down to us. But we're not content. We always want to compare our lot with somebody else's.

Why can't I have what he has? I want to tell you this, my brothers, you pursue that way, at the end of 2011, you'll be worse than you are today. If you want to go another way, listen to the word of God this morning. It's not that Paul was a millionaire and says, oh, I'm content with what I have.

No. I'm always amused by these people who preach on tithing, something we've never preached in this church. I never believed in it.

Jesus taught giving, not tithing. We believe in giving, cheerfully, as God has prospered us, but not tithing, which is a law which brings people into bondage. I heard of a man who was a very rich businessman who didn't give 10%, but he gave 90% of his income to God.

And you say, boy, what a godly man. He used to get \$20 million a year was his income, and he gave \$18 million to God, and he had only \$2 million to live on in the year. Poor man.

Poor man. How could he live on \$2 million in a year? Don't be impressed by these people who say, I'm tithing. I'm giving 20%.

I'm giving 30%. Brother, how much do you earn? And you make these laws for poor people who are struggling day to day, living from hand to mouth? The Christian world is full of these hypocrites and humbugs. And there's no preacher who's there to expose them because all these preachers want their money.

The only preacher who can speak the truth is the man who's not interested in anybody's money. I'll tell you the truth. Learn to be content like Paul in whatever circumstance you're in.

He says, he wasn't a millionaire. You know that Paul was a poor man. Do you know that there were times in Paul's life when he didn't have money to buy food? Any of you been like that any time? You read that in 2 Corinthians chapter 11.

He makes a list of the trials he went through. One was fasting where he deliberately went without food. That was his choice.

At other time, he was hungry. He didn't have money. You read in 2 Timothy 4 that he was shivering in a Roman prison and he didn't have money to get a blanket to cover himself.

Any of you been like that? That he writes to Timothy and says, please, Timothy, get me that blanket I left behind over there because I need it. I'm shivering here in this cold. You read in 2 Timothy 4. This is the man who was writing.

For the sake of the gospel, he was in prison and he writes Philippians from a jail. He wasn't sitting at a table and writing this letter. From a jail.

And those Roman jails were full of cockroaches and rats and mosquitoes and all types of things and sitting on a cold floor, chained to somebody, probably given some dry bread as their food. Sitting there, he says, I have learned, verse 11, to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with very little.

And I know also how to get along in prosperity. See, that's what many Christians don't know. They don't know how to get along with little and they don't know how to get along when they have prosperity.

They haven't learned either. You may say, well, I know how to get along when I'm prosperous. No, you don't.

You know how to spend all that money on yourself when you're rich. That every idiot in the world knows. When you get a lot of money, how to spend it all on yourself.

That you know, which every, let me use that word again, stupid businessman in the world knows. But do you know what God intended you to do when you have a lot of money? You don't know that. Paul knew how to be poor and how to be rich.

He says, I know how. I've learned the secret of having plenty, being filled and going hungry, having an abundance and suffering need. And he said, I'm just the same.

When I have plenty, I don't get excited about it. When I suffer need, I don't complain. You know why? Because he saw God as a big God.

And I am this wee teeny weeny amoeba. So he could go in and out through the needle all the time. He could possess more and more of God's kingdom.

It all depends on what you see yourself in relation to God. He said, God is almighty. If he wants, he can give me so much.

Paul could sit struggling there with little food and, you know, shivering without a blanket. He could think of Abraham, whom God made so rich, and Job, whom God made so rich, and David and Solomon, whom God made so rich. And it is the easiest thing in the world for God to make me rich like that.

But for some wonderful reason, this almighty God has decided that I, Paul, should be poor. Praise the Lord. That's fine.

I want to be what God wants me to be. That's why he became a mighty apostle. Whenever you see anywhere a man of God whom God has used, or a woman of God whom God has used, you can be pretty sure that there's one lesson that man has learned.

To be content. To thank God when he has nothing and to be wise when he has plenty. He realizes it's not all for himself.

If you learn that lesson, which that rich young ruler did not learn, we can live the life that the Lord wants us to live. A life free from discouragement, a life of victory. And this is the man who says later on, because of this attitude he had in verse 13.

Verse 13 is a very favorite verse with Christians all over the world. You know it also. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Brother, sister, please begin at verse 11. You can't jump to verse 13 before you go through verses 11 and 12. This is the man who could do everything through Christ who strengthens him.

He said, I can handle every situation. I can overcome every temptation. Why is it that we just quote that verse, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, but the smallest little trial we grumble and complain.

It's because we have not seen ourselves as nothing before an almighty God. We bow before him and say, Lord, what you say I will do. And I will be content with whatever you have made me.

I shall not complain about anything in my life. I know how to live with little. Now I know a lot of people when they have little, the only way they know how to live with little is to go and borrow money.

And they say they want to walk like Jesus. Jesus also had little sometimes. But can you imagine Jesus going to somebody and saying, can I borrow some money from you? My heavenly father sort of let me down today.

I don't know, he was okay till yesterday, but today somehow or the other he didn't give me what I needed. So when my heavenly father lets me down, who am I to turn to? I have to turn to some of you guys who will help me out. That is what borrowing means.

Paul didn't do that. The man who wrote, Oh, no man anything. You want to be a godly man, make a decision in your life that you will not borrow.

I am not preaching what I have not practiced. 70 years, 71 years I have lived on this earth. I have never been in debt.

I have never borrowed. Many times when I had very little, my wife and I decided we will live with the little. We won't buy certain things that we may think we need.

We don't need them. We discovered later on that we could live without them. When we could afford them, we got it.

Paul was that way. Whereas today's Christians, they look at other people and say that believer has got it, so I have got to have it. If I don't have it, I am going to borrow.

And when they build a house, they build a house much bigger than they need because that is how other people have it and they are going to borrow. You think such people are going to come to this life of overcoming and triumph? They can sing a lot of hymns, but they will never come to this life because they have not learned to be content with little. And God was testing them when they had little.

There are two ways God tests us. One, sometimes He gives us very little. We say, Lord, I am going to be content.

You are Almighty God. I am not going to violate Your laws. I shall humble myself and believe that You will take care of me.

Do you remember the mistake that Abraham made? I don't have time to show that to you. You read in the Old Testament in Genesis chapter 12. God said, Go to Canaan.

He went to Canaan. And it says, as soon as he went to Canaan, there was a famine. That was very little.

What do you do then? Abraham did what most believers do. He went to Egypt. Oh, there is no famine.

I will go there. What did he get from Egypt? Do you remember? You don't remember? A servant woman called Hagar picked her up and brought her back to Canaan. And when he didn't have a child through Sarah, Sarah said, Have one through Hagar.

And through Hagar came Ishmael. And if you read the history of Ishmael and Isaac, the problem continues till today. History books will tell you that.

But it all began with one man who didn't stay where God told him to stay. He used his human wisdom and said, I think I'll go to Egypt. Do you know how many problems you can cause for your family and for other people if you don't stay where God tells you to stay, if you're not content with what God gives you? Learn to be content.

Make sure that the coming year is a year where you're going to be content with little or much. You say, Lord, I'm not going to compare myself to anybody else. I have a father in heaven who takes care of me.

I love that passage in the last verse of John 7 where it says everybody went to their own house. The next verse in John 8 says Jesus went to the Mount of Olives because nobody invited him home. They all listened to the wonderful sermons in John 7 and nobody thought of inviting the preacher to their homes.

They never asked him, Where are you staying tonight? It's never happened to me, by the way. People are so good to me. They give me the best room in the house.

But Jesus went another way when he was on earth. He preached to them and nobody asked him at the end of the day, Lord, where are you staying tonight? His home is in Capernaum. He's now in Jerusalem.

Nobody invited him. People were blessed by his sermons. You know what he did? He said, Well, today is a clear night.

Thank God it's not raining. I can go and sleep under the trees. And he lay down under the trees in the Mount of Olives.

You read that in John 7, 53 and 81. And he came back next morning and nobody asked him, Where did you sleep last night, Lord? Nobody. And he just continued preaching.

And that's why he set that woman free who was caught in adultery. I love that. I love these examples of Jesus' life where he was so content.

He had no complaint against anybody. Isn't it wonderful to live like that? Where you have no complaint. Somebody didn't consider you, didn't do this for you.

You have so many complaints. Your wife didn't do this that she's supposed to do as a wife. Or your husband didn't do this, which he's supposed to do.

It's about 15 years since he told me that he loved me. Boy, what all demands people had. You'll always be miserable if you're like that.

Be small. Be a nobody. Because God is almighty.

There are times when I look up at the night sky. It's a very good thing to meditate on. I see the stars.

And knowing a little bit of geography, I know these stars are billions of miles away. Look at the whole universe. Earth is a little speck.

And my Father in Heaven runs this universe. And I say, Lord, this little dust grain of sand called the Earth, on top of that there's another little small teeny weeny thing called me. And, Lord, I stand in a pulpit to

represent you.

Please let me be humble. Let me not think that I'm somebody. I'm a nobody.

Please remember that, brothers and sisters. It'll go well with you in the days to come. It really will.

You'll find that the coming year is far greater, far better than anything you've ever experienced. I'm looking forward to that. Far better.

I don't want to make the same progress I made this year and the next year. I want to make more. You have a passion for that? Just like the worldly businessman wants to make more money? What is your pursuit? What is the thing that makes you happy? That you got a big bonus better than you expected? God have mercy on you.

Are you a believer or an unbeliever? That money makes you happy? Can you imagine Jesus getting happy one day because, ah, that guy put a thousand denarii into Judas Iscariot's bag. Boy, I'm excited. Can you imagine Jesus being excited about something stupid like that? We say we want to be like Christ.

Not really. The thing that Jesus wanted to maintain throughout until the end of his life was fellowship with the Father. Never for a moment did he want to break that fellowship with the Father with any type of sin or anything that displeased his Heavenly Father.

And I want to urge you, my dear brothers and sisters, as an older brother to all of you, I'd advise you pursue that way. Make your home more heavenly this year than it's ever been so far with the peace of God reigning there. Ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of joy, where all grumbling and complaining about everything will be eliminated because you're a small person who believes in a big God.

And because you have this big God who supports you in all situations, your enemies will crumble before you because this Almighty God supports you. God is with those who are broken and contrite in spirit. And it's amazing what he does for such people.

He'll do that for you. Let's pray. As our heads are bowed in prayer, I want to invite you, my brothers and sisters, to respond to God's word.

Let God be God, the big Almighty God that he is. And have a sober estimate of yourself as a little speck of dust before him whom he has loved so much that he gave his son to die for. You're very valuable, but you're still very small.

Remember both things. You're extremely valuable to God, very precious in his eyes. But let not that go to our head to think that we are somebody heavenly father.

Help us to have a sober estimate of ourselves. We have wasted many years of our life, many of us. We don't want to waste another year that lies ahead of us.

We pray that you will help us to have a sober estimate of ourselves. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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