

Overcoming as Jesus Did

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of overcoming sin and living a life reflective of true faith in Jesus Christ to secure a place in His eternal kingdom.

Duration: 1:10:56

Scripture: Isaiah 2:22, Matthew 6:24, John 16:32, Romans 6:14, Galatians 1:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of aligning our values with God's values, focusing on the need to overcome worldly thinking and prioritize spiritual growth. It highlights the significance of not being swayed by human opinions, valuing humility, clear conscience, and using money as a servant rather than a master. The goal is to encourage individual spiritual maturity to contribute to a strong and spiritually healthy church.

Transcript

If all that we believed and stood for was exactly the same as what many other churches believed and stood for, there would be no need to start another church. We might as well join one of the others. Because I do not believe in breaking up churches unless it's a matter of it being too big and breaking up for size.

But when you look at the history of Christianity through the years, you always find, you know, a church that started well over a period of time declining, decaying and then some people who are looking for life in that church pulling out and starting separately. In the book of Revelation you read about the sad condition of some churches in chapter 2 and 3. Five out of the seven churches were in a pathetic condition and the Lord called them to repent. And if the elders, a lot depends on the leadership, the church becomes like its leader and if they had not repented, the group of people whom the Lord called the overcomers would not have stayed, they would have left.

And that would have been another church. And the Lord would have been there in that small group. And that's been the history of Christianity through the years.

So, one of the things, for example, that we stand for which is different, which is in scripture, which people don't emphasize is this. Many Christian groups, you know, there are a lot of Christian groups that don't even preach about being born again. If you are born in a Christian family, they just baptize you as a child

and you are assumed that you are a Christian.

But then there are churches that say, No, you must be born again. Well, that's a little better. But there also, I find that it's as though once you are born again, that's it.

It almost doesn't matter how you live after that. They say, well, you are born again, now you are a child of God and you are going to be in eternity with God in Heaven. So, they don't take sin seriously thereafter.

And then there are other churches which go one step further and say, well, you must be not only born again, you must be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Okay, that's a little better than the first group. But there also, it's that same assumption.

Okay, now that you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, you speak in tongues, it doesn't really matter, everything is okay. And these groups, which started out well, emphasizing being born again or emphasizing being baptized in the Holy Spirit, after a while, you find some people in these churches or number of people in these churches, their quality of their life is no better than the life of a lot of people who are in churches that don't even preach any of these things. And, I mean, you take an extreme situation like the Roman Catholic Church which doesn't preach about being born again or baptized in the Holy Spirit and I found some Roman Catholics who are far more godly than some of these people who seem to speak in tongues.

And that surprised me, I said, there's something wrong here. And I believe that the reason is, we have not emphasized something, they have not emphasized something the New Testament emphasizes that the Christian life is like a race. The Bible says very clearly in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1 and 2, Let us run the race, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Now, even if you were so good at running that you qualified to represent your country in the Olympic Games and let's say you qualified in all the heats and came to the final of the hundred meters, you know, eight fastest men in the world standing in the starting line of the hundred meters and supposing you came to the starting line, I tell you, that itself would be a great honor. I mean, if I ever came to the starting line of a hundred meters in the Olympic Games, I'd say I've really achieved something to even get there. No Indian has ever got to the hundred meters final in any Olympics.

But imagine after the starting gun is fired and I stand there at the starting line, people would think I'm off my head. What's wrong with me? Did I come to the starting line just to stand there? And glory in the fact that, boy, I came to the starting line of the finals of the hundred meters in the Olympics. I know there's a great honor there.

But that's not what I came there for. I came there to run. Even if I didn't come first and get a gold medal, at least I ran.

But a lot of Christians, they come to whatever they consider the starting line, whether being born again or baptized in the Holy Spirit, you see them ten, fifteen years later, they are still there. It's the height of stupidity. The Christian life is a race that has run the race, looking unto Jesus, who ran all the way till the end and finally reached the finishing line, which is the throne of God.

So, that's what it says in Hebrews 12, verse 1 and 2. And it says he endured the cross, chapter 12, verse 2, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. That's the finishing line. Now, if you compare that with Revelation chapter 3, and verse 21.

In the Revelation chapter 3, verse 21, the Lord says, if you overcome, now make that personal, if you overcome, just like I overcame, then I will allow you to sit with me on my throne, just like I sat down with my father on his throne. So, how did Jesus get to the father's throne? It was not automatically saying, Oh, you are the son of God, you can come up here anytime you like. No, it says here, I overcame.

Now, the word overcoming means there is something you have fought with and won, like a wrestling match. It's someone you've grappled with in that wrestling match and overcame and you were the victor. So, when Jesus says he overcame, now there is nothing great if almighty God in heaven said, I overcame certain things.

Actually, that's like a man saying, I crushed that little ant under my foot. Is that something you glory in, that you crushed a little ant under your foot? For God almighty to say that he overcame something, it's as meaningless as crushing an ant under your foot. So, that's not overcoming.

I wouldn't even consider that you overcame something. If you overcame a lion, I would say, okay, you can call that overcoming. But you crushed an ant under your foot, you got to be crazy to call that overcoming.

So, when Jesus says he overcame something, it was something that he had to battle with. Almighty God's got to battle with nothing. He speaks a word and worlds are created.

So, it must be referring to the time when Jesus was here on earth as a man and was tempted exactly like us and had to struggle like we struggle against temptation. When people opposed him and hated him, he struggled to love them and he was determined to love them. And he overcame.

He consistently overcame. And that was the race. And he finally reached the finishing line, which is the throne of God.

And it says in this verse, if you also overcome and overcome and overcome, one day you can reach the finishing line and sit on the throne. Now, what would you think if the verse read like this, whether you overcome or not, you will one day sit with me on my throne. Is there a verse like that in the Bible? But that's what most Christians preach.

That's what I heard for years in so many churches. Ah, you have accepted the Lord. It doesn't matter whether you overcome or not.

We are all human. We fail, we fall. You will still sit to the throne of God.

I want to say you will not. If you keep on not overcoming and finally Jesus makes you sit to the man's throne, I would say in heaven that Jesus Christ, you are a liar. You are a liar because you said in Revelation 3.21, only those who overcome are going to sit with you on the throne and now you make everybody sit with you on the throne.

What is that? To scare people on the earth? Told a lie? I don't believe that. And yet some Christians are accusing Jesus of being a liar. When they say, whether you overcome or not, you will still sit with Jesus on the throne.

I want to tell you the truth. You will not. Where you will be, I don't know.

And I am not interested in finding out. See, for example, if there are rules for Australian citizens, I am not interested in finding out those rules because I am not one of those citizens. I don't care.

So, when there is some complicated rule that you got to study, you better study it if you are a citizen. I don't have to study it because I am not a citizen. It doesn't apply to me.

But if you want to be a citizen, you better study that rule carefully and many of you did. So, I say, if you don't want to get to the right hand of the throne of God, then don't worry. You don't have to worry.

Like I don't worry about what the rules are for Australian citizens. But if you want to get to the right hand of the throne of God, you better find out what the rules are. And it's so clear in the teaching of Jesus.

If you, I mean, either he is telling the truth or he is telling a lie. I know I have met non-Christians who say to me in India, Why are you guys so narrow-minded? Say, Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. Why don't you be broad-minded and say there are many ways to God.

And I tell them, listen, it's not a question of my opinion or yours. I ask you one question. Do you want me to call Jesus Christ a liar? Oh, no, no, no.

We don't want you to do that because they respect Christ. I say, okay, then I'll tell you what Jesus Christ himself said, not what Zakk Cronin says. Jesus Christ said in John 14, 6, I am the way.

No one comes to the Father but by me. What does that mean in plain English? It means no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ. Now, if you want me to say, no, you can come to the Father through other ways, you are indirectly asking me to call Jesus Christ a liar.

I'm sorry, I will not call him a liar. So, this broad-minded way is indirectly calling him a liar. You know, it's something like, people ask me this, Why are you Christians so narrow-minded? Only say Jesus Christ is the only way.

Not only this, I say all truth is narrow-minded. Supposing I say 2 plus 2 is 4, they say, why are you so narrow-minded? Why can't you accept it as 3 also? Another fellow says 2 plus 2 is 5, accept him. Or at least 3.9 or 3.99, I say, sorry, not even 3.999, it is 4. You try to be broad-minded in mathematics, you'll go nuts.

You can't be. 3 plus 3 is 6, whether you like it or not. 2 plus 2 is 4. We can accept truth as being narrow-minded in mathematics or even in chemistry.

They study in chemistry that 2 parts of hydrogen plus 1 part of oxygen is water. You say, don't be so narrow-minded. Why do you have to say that? One just takes 2 parts of hydrogen as water.

It isn't. It's not. So, why is it only in the spiritual realm people say truth can't be rigid and strict? Every other realm we accept it.

This is because people don't know God. People who don't know mathematics may say 2 plus 2 is 5. People who don't know chemistry may say, yeah, it doesn't matter whether you got 2 parts of hydrogen, 1 part of oxygen is water. And people who don't know God will say, yeah, yeah, there are so many ways.

In the same way, Christians also, we say, okay, we accept that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. But, I'll tell you where Christians are also got it wrong. Whether you overcome or not, you'll still sit with Jesus on the throne of God.

Isn't that what most Christians teach? It is not in the Bible. The Bible is so clear, unless Jesus is a liar. If you overcome, as I overcame, you will sit with me on my throne.

That is so clear that you have to call Jesus a liar. If you say or give people the impression, ah, it doesn't matter how you live, you're going to get there. It doesn't matter how you live with your wife at home, whether you overcome sin or not.

Yeah, just confess it. Do you think a man is overcoming if he keeps on sinning every day and then confesses it? Is that called overcoming? I don't believe that's overcoming at all. If I go into a wrestling match and I lose every time, can I say I've overcome? I go tomorrow and I lose again.

I go tomorrow and every day and I keep on losing. Can you call me an overcomer? Can you call me a victor? No, you'll call me a loser. And that's how a lot of Christians are.

But they still believe in their heart, oh, God is so kind and he's so merciful. Somehow or the other he'll just ignore all that and say, okay, you're all forgiven, you're okay. You're all going to sit with Jesus on the throne.

I want to tell you, it's not true. And it's better to know it now than to get a surprise at the judgment seat of Christ. I've said this to the Lord many times.

I said, Lord, please don't ever give me a surprise at the judgment seat of Christ. I don't want to get any surprises there. I want to know the truth about myself and about my eternal destiny now.

I don't want to be even one percent unsure about my salvation, about my relationship with God, about where I'm going to be in eternity and what's going to be my eternal destiny. I may not know all the details of heaven, but I do want to know about my relationship with God. It's like, you know, supposing a doctor tells you, listen, I don't think you've got cancer, but there's a five percent chance that you may have a pretty deadly form of cancer.

And you say, oh, that's okay, doctor. It's a five percent, it's not serious. Ninety-five percent, you're sure I'm okay, right? Which of you would take that position? You'd say, no, you've got to go through the test.

And the doctor says, the tests are pretty expensive. They're going to cost you a lot of money, which even the Australian social security may not cover completely. You'd say, yes, tell me, I don't mind spending it.

I want to be sure that I'm one hundred percent free from cancer. Why are we so particular about physical health that we want to rule out cancer a hundred percent? But when it comes to spiritual things, if I'm ninety-five percent certain it's okay, I'll tell you why. Because we think our body is more important than our spirit.

It's one of the greatest deceptions that the devil has put upon the human race, making that their body is more important than their spirit. I say, I know whether I'm a wholehearted Christian, for me anyway, there's one simple test. If I treat cancer as more serious than sin, I'm not at all a wholehearted Christian.

If a blood test shows that I've got AIDS, and that disturbs me more than my frequently falling into anger, I'm not a wholehearted Christian. You know, there are people who get AIDS even without sex. Sometimes they get a blood transfusion with an infected needle and you can get AIDS.

It may not be due to any sin on your part, but you got AIDS for no fault of yours. Some nurse used an infected needle, that's all, in some blood transfusion. Supposing you discovered that by some accident like that in some hospital, you got AIDS, and that disturbs you.

It'll disturb every one of you. I want to ask you, are you disturbed when you frequently fall into anger? Are you disturbed when you frequently fall into dirty thoughts? Or look at computer sites that you should never go to? It doesn't disturb you? That is a proof that you don't really know God at all. You are just like any old heathen in the world who thinks your body is the most important thing you have.

So long as your body is healthy, the other things are not important. Well, what's the difference between you and any heathen? That's how they feel too. Atheists feel like that.

An atheist would be disturbed if he discovered at a blood test that he's got AIDS. An atheist is not at all disturbed if he loses his temper. You say, but he watches TV and I go to church.

Well, you should be more, you are more answerable to God than him. That guy doesn't have any understanding. So you find, you know, the fundamental problem with Christians is this.

I'll tell you, they don't take the word of God seriously and they are dishonest. They are dishonest because they say the Bible is the word of God but they don't take what's written in it seriously. I've asked people this question.

I say, tell me honestly. Do you really believe with all your heart that there's only one book in the whole world that God has written? Or do you believe the Bible is one among, it's a good book, a lot of good teachings, but I mean, it's not God's word. I say, then be honest.

Say, I don't believe this is God's word. I pick and choose what I think is God's word and what is not. I'll tell you honestly, that is what many Christians actually believe.

If you believed that there was only one book written by God, think of it like this. Many of you are immigrants in this country. Supposing the Australian government had made one little booklet, maybe 20 pages.

Say, you must know this book thoroughly if you want to be a citizen. I tell you, every one of you would know it by heart. You wouldn't worry about what all the other agencies say are necessary for becoming a citizen.

You'd say the Australian government has said this one book is necessary for you to know if you want to be a citizen. You would study it and read it and read it and read it and read it because you want to be a citizen. Why is that? Is it because you're more eager to be an Australian citizen than to be a citizen of heaven? You've got to face up to it.

And when you go to God and confess your sin, say, Lord, my sin is, I'm more interested in being an Australian citizen than being a citizen of heaven. I'm more interested in pleasing the Australian government than pleasing Almighty God. That is my sin.

I want to repent of it. I want to turn around and say, Lord, I want to please you from now on. I couldn't care less if I'm a citizen of Congo or Rwanda or any place like that, but I want to be a citizen of heaven.

And Lord, is there only one book in the world that shows me the way there? And I want to take it seriously. If you really believed it, you would devote yourself to studying the scriptures. I did that 50 years ago.

Because I was convinced in my heart, I was only 21, that there is only one book in the whole world that God Almighty has written. And if there is only one book that tells me what is going to be pleasing to God, what is God's way, and no one has seen God at any time, and Jesus Christ is the only one who has come to reveal, I want to know everything because that's what's going to make me eternally happy. Yeah, I was seeking my own, I can say.

I was seeking my own eternal destiny. I was seeking to see what God created me for. You know, it's like if you get a job in an office, and which office will tell you when you go to get a new job there, supposing you go to a new job, and they say, come here and do whatever you like, you know, just have fun.

There's no job in the world that tells you that. They have a job description. They'll give you a printed sheet.

Say, this is what we expect you to do. And supposing you get that printed sheet, you say, ah, who's going to take all that seriously? I'll come here and enjoy myself, and I'll do whatever I feel like every day. You'll get sacked probably in one day.

You'd be lucky if you last two days in such an office. But you wouldn't do that, because money is so valuable. You'd follow every, there are 25 instructions, you'll follow all those instructions, because you want to get your salary at the end of the month.

Why don't we follow scripture carefully like that? I mean, supposing somebody promised you \$100 for every command in the Bible you obeyed, would you obey more zealously? Or would you say, well, it won't make me any more zealous to obey God's commands if somebody promised me \$100 or \$10,000 for every command I obeyed. I'd obey them even if there's zero profit from it, because it is God's word. So when God created man, he had a plan for us, just like when you join an office, you've got a job description.

You know there's a job description for man? Man was created to please God. And if you haven't fulfilled that job description, you're a total failure. I'm going to tell you the truth.

If I, as a servant of God, for example, when I preach, if I preach to please one single human being out of 10,000 people sitting in front of me, I'm not a servant of God. I'm not fit to preach. Because I'm preaching thinking of that one fellow sitting there I want to please.

I don't want to please anybody. Almighty God is there. He's the only one I want to please.

Because that's my job description as a human being. I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, do you really believe that your only calling in life is to please God? And if you don't please him, whatever else you may do, you may say, I'm not going to have television in my home. I'm going to go to all the meetings.

You can do all that. If you don't please God, you've wasted your time. So, if you overcome, you will sit with Jesus on his throne.

So, these are the reasons why we have to start another church. Because we want to emphasize some of these things which are not emphasized by anybody. And if that's the reason why you came to this fellowship, God bless you.

But if you came to this fellowship because you were fed up with some other church, you're not going to be very happy here. I told one brother who once came to me in one of the conferences in India. He said, Brother Zak, I'm also fed up with the Pentecostals.

I want to join your church. I said, please don't join. Because you'll get fed up with us after a while.

Because we are not a bunch of people who are fed up with the Pentecostals. We're not a bunch of people who are fed up with the Baptists or even the Roman Catholics. We're not fed up with the Hindus.

We're fed up with ourselves and our defeated lives. That's why we came together to encourage one another to overcome what we're fed up with ourselves. And I say the day you get fed up with yourself and your defeated life, welcome.

But if you're fed up with that group, you'll come here and you'll get fed up with us. And I've seen that. People are fed up with this group, that group.

They say, hey, this is a new church. Let's go and join it. As soon as they join, they'll find something fault.

Because we're not a bunch of perfect people. No, there's no group in the world which is a bunch of perfect people. We've got weaknesses.

And they'll see some fault in somebody and find critics criticizing that. I say, it's better such people never come to our church. Don't waste your time.

And I say, even Jesus. A lot of people say, anybody can come to Jesus. I say, no.

Anybody cannot come to Jesus. Where does it say that in the Bible? Jesus said, come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

Who said He invited everybody? If labour and heavy laden means you're sick and tired of yourself. That's what it means. Jesus, in modern terms, it would be like Jesus saying, come to me all of you who are sick and tired of living your defeated life.

Sick and tired of living by rules and regulations. Instead of living by the life of Almighty God. You're sick and tired of it.

Come to me. I'll lead you into that life. So, who said He invited everybody? He didn't invite everybody.

He invited people who are sick and tired of their defeated life. And the trouble with a lot of Christians is they try to come to Jesus without being sick and tired of their defeated life. It's like joining a nice club.

But this club is a little better than that club. There are more facilities here. That's how a lot of people join a church.

They're not sick and tired of their own defeated life. And that's why whichever church in the world they join, they'll always be frustrated. And they'll always be troublemakers.

I've seen such people. Because they're always seeking their own. I remember another person who once came to me and said, Oh, Brother Jack, I went to this church and they didn't show me any love there.

I said, where in the Bible does it say that you've got to join a church for people to show you love? I said, Bible says you must love the other person. Not get them to love you. Is there any verse in the Bible that says get everybody to love you? No.

You go looking for the wrong thing. No, there are so many things which we know a lot of people who think they're very fine Christians are not. Because it's their own human ideas.

Or they looked at other Christians and got their ideas from them. They didn't get it from the Bible because they don't believe in their heart that God has written only one book. A lot of our so-called Christian ideas have come from either our own thinking or what we've heard from other people without checking up with what God has said in his book.

So, I want to suggest to you, to all of you who don't have the habit already, to seriously study the scriptures. Otherwise, I tell you, you could get some wrong ideas in your head. Which are not in God's word.

For example, let me show you another verse. It says in 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 5. The same verse, by the way, is also mentioned in James chapter 4 and verse 6. Same verse. It's repeated twice.

God is opposed to the proud but he gives grace to the humble. Last part of verse 5. There's a certain type of person whom God opposes. That means God is the enemy of a certain type of person.

There's no verse in the Bible which says God is the enemy of the adulterer. No verse in the Bible that says God is the enemy of the murderer. These are two of the greatest sins.

I mean, if there was somebody sitting here, who's regularly murdering people, you wouldn't have much respect for him, right? You wouldn't think that God is very happy with him. I mean, he commits a murder every alternate day or something. What about somebody here you know is committing adultery every week? With some woman.

You wouldn't think that person is a godly man. But if some man or woman sits here and is proud, you could still think that he's a godly person. Where do you get that idea from? From the world.

Because the world thinks murderers and adulterers are evil people. But they don't think proud people are evil people. See how much our mind is influenced by the world.

We think we know God, we don't know God at all. I never find Jesus condemning a murder. Did he condemn the murder on the cross? No, he took him to paradise.

Did he condemn the woman caught in adultery? No, he said, I forgive you. What about that other woman in Samaria who was divorced five times and now sleeping around with a man who's not even her husband? Jesus forgave her. But what about the Pharisees who are not murdering, who are not committing adultery? He said, you guys will go to hell.

Have you understood God's way of thinking? He opposes the proud. It's like the law of gravity. You know, people ask, what about if a believer is proud? I say, God will oppose him.

I mean, it's like a law. If you jump off the roof of a building, the law of gravity doesn't find out are you a believer or not before deciding whether to pull you down. Whether you are a believer or not, the law of

gravity will just pull you down, you break your head.

It makes no difference whether you are a believer or not. This is a law. God is the enemy of the proud.

It doesn't matter whether you are a believer or not a believer. If you are proud, God is your enemy. If you are proud of your Bible knowledge, God is your enemy.

If you are proud that you are more spiritual than somebody else sitting here, God is your enemy whether you knew it or not. He gives grace to the humble. You know, the reason why a lot of believers don't get grace, who imagine they have got grace, is because God sees there is no humility in them.

I'll tell you something, brothers and sisters, even if everybody in this church thinks you are a very humble person, if God doesn't give you grace, he doesn't think so. Why does it matter if everybody in the church thinks I am a very humble person and almighty God doesn't give me grace, proving that he doesn't think so. What am I doing? Am I living in a delusion? Supposing I have got serious cancer in me, but everybody here thinks I am very healthy.

I say, it's okay, everybody thinks I am healthy. You got to be an idiot to think like that. You are sick with cancer and you are rejoicing in the fact that everybody thinks you are healthy.

You got to be seriously off your head. But that's exactly how many Christians are. Everybody in the church thinks I am very spiritual.

Really? And that's what you see when you got serious cancer inside you. How can it be? We value our physical health so much, that if we have got cancer, it doesn't matter if everybody in the world thinks I am healthy. The MRI scan showed me I have got cancer.

So, if I am not getting grace from God, it's no use everybody thinking I am a wonderful believer. How do I know whether I got grace from God? It says in Romans 6.14, Romans 6.14 says, If you get grace, no sin can rule over you. That's sure.

Romans 6.14 it says, Sin shall not, not may not. There is a difference between may not and shall not. It's very simple English.

If you are under grace, it doesn't say sin may not rule over you after that. It's clear cut, shall not rule over you. It's more certain than if you have fulfilled all the conditions for citizenship, you become a citizen.

Some of you knew that after so many months you become a citizen. How did you know that? How could you predict that, yeah, after one year I will be a citizen. How did you know that? Because there were certain rules that the Australian government laid down and you knew that another year from now you complete those rules, you become a citizen.

Well, here is what God's word says, If you receive grace, sin will not rule over you. It's absolute certain, more certain than you are becoming a citizen. How in the world can so many Christians be defeated by sin and still believe that they are under grace? I can't understand that.

I'll tell you why. They don't believe this is God's word. They believe some figment of their imagination is what is right and what God's word says is not true.

I want to tell you something, my brothers and sisters. I've read this book for 50 years and I've come to one conclusion. This is the word of God.

I've never found a book like that in the whole world and I found every single promise and it works if I take it seriously. I believe with all my heart that a man who gets grace, comes under grace, no sin can rule over him. It may take time, but he'll come to the place where sin does not rule him.

To me that's the test. Otherwise I'm living in a world of delusion. I'm convinced that a lot of Christians are living in an imaginary world that doesn't exist.

Have you seen children play sometimes, small children play? That one is a general or another is a policeman. It's games. They imagine it and they can imagine it so thoroughly that you can take names of famous people.

Some child can be Napoleon or someone like that. He's not Napoleon. He's imagining.

That's exactly how a lot of Christians are. I'm a child of God. I've got grace.

I'm anointed. They're playing games. They're not serious.

Because there's no evidence of it in their life. Sin shall not rule over you if you're under grace. Then why does sin rule over me? Because I'm not under grace.

Let's face it. Why have I not got grace? God gives his grace to the humble. But brother everybody thinks I'm humble.

Everybody thinks you are but God doesn't. The only person whose opinion matters. He doesn't think you're humble.

How do you know? He doesn't give you grace to overcome sin. This is the rule I applied to myself. When I didn't overcome sin I said Lord I haven't got grace.

But Lord I've made a tremendous impression on people that I'm a very humble man. And the Lord says whatever people may think about you I don't think about that about you. And ultimately it's only God's opinion that matters.

You ask yourself one simple question. Can you honestly say about yourself that only God's opinion about me is important for me? The opinion of any other Tom, Dick or Harry is not important for me at all. You make that one decision in your life that from today onwards only God's opinion about me will matter to me.

And the opinion of everybody else in the world is going to be unimportant. I'll tell you something. You'll make more spiritual progress in the next six months than you've made in all your life till now.

We are such slaves to the opinions of men. We may have come out of being concerned about the opinions of worldly people and now come to the opinions of the few people in our church that's important for us. You're still a slave.

Once you're a slave to the opinion of worldly people now you're a slave to the opinion of other people in your church. But God created us so that we are only His slaves. That means I say to Him, Lord, I'm only interested in your opinion about me.

And I can know what your opinion about me is if I study the scriptures. And I've discovered that about myself in so many situations where I know people thought I was very spiritual and the Lord told me, I don't think so. I remember years ago the Lord said to me, Don't ever evaluate yourself by your gifts.

That's another mistake a lot of Christians make. They may have a gift. In my case it's a gift of speaking.

And when you have a gift, a real gift of speaking or writing books, boy, you get a lot of admiration from people who have been benefited by your speaking or your books. And for the Lord to say to me, Don't evaluate yourself by how many people are blessed through your ministry or through your writing. Wipe all that out of your mind and evaluate yourself by whether you live with a clear conscience every single day and every single moment.

Do you live with a clear conscience in your relationship with your wife, in your relationship with your neighbors, in your relationship with other people? Do you get angry on the road when people don't obey the traffic rules? Do you have any road rage in your life? You're not spiritual, whatever people may think about you. And so I learn to assess myself not by my gifts or my abilities or my accomplishments. Those impressed people in the world doesn't impress God at all.

God's impressed if I keep my conscience clear before Him even if I have no gift. If I humble myself in every situation and never seek to exalt myself over others in any way. That's what impresses God.

You know, that's why I say we should not ruin little children by unnecessarily getting them to be puffed up. Supposing I go to a little child and say, Boy, what a lovely dress you've got. What am I telling that child? Oh, your father is so rich, right? Buy you expensive dresses.

I'm very conscious of that in a country like India where many fathers are very poor and they cannot afford to buy expensive clothes for their children. I go to some girl in India and say, Boy, what a lovely dress you've got. What am I telling her? Oh, your father is not so poor like that poor villager.

He's a spiritual man but he's so poor he can't buy good clothes for his daughter. But your father is so rich. He's not so spiritual but he's so rich.

He can buy you a lot of expensive clothes, right? What am I helping that child to grow up one day? To be godly? No! I've been an agent of the devil at that moment. To feed her with pride, to make God her enemy. I won't do it.

What about going to a little girl and saying, Boy, what a pretty face you've got. What about that other girl who is dark and ugly? I suppose the devil made her. But God made you, right? Did the devil make all the ugly women in the world? Why didn't God decide to make every girl pretty? Are you wiser than God? I'll tell you why.

To show to those who have ears to hear that these physical looks mean zero. It's character that God cares for. I'll tell you what I do praise a little child for.

When I see a little child sharing his or her toys with somebody else, then I go and say, That was excellent. The way you shared your toys with that person. Or the way you helped that person.

Because that is something that every child can do. Not only the pretty ones. Not only the clever ones.

I don't praise a child for. You can encourage a child who's worked hard. But I don't encourage, I don't try to praise a child because he's much cleverer than somebody else.

You know when we have sometimes in our Sunday school, we have children's Sunday school in our church. And I say we don't give prizes for Bible knowledge. Now many Sunday schools they do.

I'll tell you why we don't do it. Because if you give a prize for Bible knowledge, you're testing a person's memory, not their spirituality. Ah, you remember all the verses, your memory must be excellent.

He may be a very naughty disobedient child. And we give him the first prize. Because he's got a good memory.

Who's going to get a prize in heaven for a good memory? So you know what we do. We say we'll give you a prize if you come every Sunday to school. To the church.

But even there we have to be careful because one child may not come because the parents are lazy to bring the person. It may not be his fault that he didn't turn up. So we have to be careful.

I've always been careful about this. That in a church we must reward people for the things they get rewarded in heaven. The other things they get rewarded in school.

In school that guy comes first in history because he's got a good memory. He remembers all the dates of the wars and various things like that. We're not going to reward a person in the church for memory.

But many churches do. Because they don't look at the way God looks at it. And sometimes we have quizzes in the Bible.

When children are sitting together. Okay. A question from the Bible.

Now you know we have a rule now. I follow that rule in our churches. That if you answer a question once you can't answer again.

That's the only way to make sure that even the weakest person gets an opportunity to answer a question. Otherwise what will happen? That one smart fellow will always answer all the questions. So if you answer one question keep quiet.

You're not allowed to answer the second one. That way you finally work your way down to the most ignorant, the least and the stupid boy there. And he also feels he's important in the church.

See a good church is one that makes people feel important. If they have some physical defects so what? You know once my family and I when the children were small. We acted a little small little skit or a drama.

To teach some values in the church. So I sat with my four children and my wife. And we were acting a little drama.

And I told one of my boys now you act like a retarded child who doesn't know how to speak. You don't know any, you can't speak any words. You just say mana mana or something like that.

And they say okay here's the drama. Hey we fellas we got to have a, we got to prepare a song for the next you know Sunday. All families are going to sing a song.

Let's sing a song. And so we say let's say sing count your blessings. And we say count your blessings name their one.

We all sing together but this retarded child he doesn't know tunes. He doesn't know he keeps on saying some syllables. And all the other boys say hey dad you got to get this fellow to keep quiet.

Otherwise you'll never be able to sing properly in the church. Because he's messing up the whole thing. And then I say hey listen he's also a child of ours.

Just because he can't speak properly or sing properly does not mean he's not valuable. He's as important and as valuable in this family as any of you smart clever boys. Okay so if you're an intelligent smart boy you're going to sing in such a way that you will get him also involved in it.

And they say how can we do that? Well you got to think. You fellas are supposed to be clever. Think how you can sing count your blessings and get this boy also involved who cannot say one word.

You don't know? Okay I'll tell you how to do it. Okay. Make him say as we sing count your blessings we sing one line and then he's going to say his part at the end of that line.

Right? Okay. And a little bit of practice we do it. Count your blessings name them one by one.

Okay. Count your blessings see what God has done. Good.

Actually this sounds so much better than just singing it by that. We're going to get the first prize in this competition. And then at the end of the skit I told the church.

I said that is a true church where we take the weakest person and make him feel he's important to God. He may have other ways in which he's not smart he doesn't know the Bible like you fellas and he's not but he's a good person. That boy is a good boy only thing he's mentally retarded.

So what? And I see a good church is a church where we don't honor those who are clever and smart and capable and gifted but those who are godly and those who are humble. And I tell you you'll find very few churches like that in the whole world. But that's the church where Jesus is.

As I said God was not foolish to make people of different degrees of attractiveness. Physically I mean. Why has he made some people handsome and some people not so handsome? Why did he make some people bald and some people with a lot of good hair? Why did he make some people pretty and some people not so pretty? Did he make a mistake? He didn't.

It is to prove as I said that the thing that matters to him is character. Why does he allow some children to be born into the world with down syndrome? Is that a mistake God made? Or was God not concentrating on that woman who became pregnant? And what all we accuse God of indirectly? You got to face the fact that there's a lot of such things in the world and we can't say God is ignorant. But I find that I remember once I was in a I had gone with another brother to a meeting in one place and some of those young people were very you know they were not really all wholehearted Christians and we had a question time and this other brother who sat with me was quite fat and one of the questions is we were having a question time and one of those smart young fellows asked me Brother Jack, why are some people so fat? And I said I'll answer that.

That is to see whether the thin people will judge them or not. That's why God has allowed some people to be fat. You know, the world is full of slim women who are very proud of their nice figure.

Look at that fat woman. I thank God I'm not like that. They don't realize that God is judging them at that moment with their attitude.

And you can look at another person and despise him for some earthly quality that he lacks which has zero value before God. Do you know that it matters nothing to God whether you are fat or thin? Whether you are bald or not bald, whether you are clever or not clever. The only thing that matters to God is are you humble? Are you God fearing? And I say a church that values those things is the church I want to be a part of.

I don't want to be a part of a church where they value the things that worldly people value, which corporations in the world value. I say that's the world. There's a distinct difference between the church and the world.

We think the world gets into the church only when television comes in and movies come in and rock music comes in. No, no, those are the obvious ways. There are many subtle ways in which worldly values come into the church.

And I say this is no longer the church of Jesus Christ. This is just a worldly church. Oh no, but they don't go to television.

The women are all dressed modestly. Ah, that's all true. But they have got certain values there which are exactly like the values in the world.

I say that's a worldly church. Do you know that worldliness is essentially in our mind? It says that in Romans chapter 12. See what Romans chapter 12 says.

Verse 2. You read the whole sentence and you'll see that worldliness is in your mind. See if you get it. You're all smart guys.

See if you get it in that verse that worldliness is in your mind. Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So let me paraphrase that.

Don't be conformed to this world in your mind but be transformed in your mind by renewal. So where is conformity to the world? In your mind essentially. Why does a woman dress in a worldly way? Because her mind is worldly.

You can change the dress of that sister. She has not become unworldly just because she dresses in a different way now. She may be dressing now like that just for your honour.

Mind is still worldly. Worldliness is in the mind. It's a certain way of thinking that values what the world values.

And the Bible says if you're like that you'll be a worldly person. Even if you look very spiritual on the outside. What are your values? If you want to be spiritual you must allow God to change your value system so that you begin to have heavenly values.

Where you begin to look at things the way God looks at them. Not the way the world looks at them. We have grown up from childhood valuing certain things and not valuing certain things.

And those values we have got from seeing other people in the world. We go to school and we acquire certain values there. We read the newspapers, we see the advertisements in the world and say these things are important for me.

I tell people don't be fooled by all these advertisements that tell you you cannot live without this. You need to get it. This is the latest thing everybody is getting.

I say whenever you see an advertisement like that say to yourself man lived for 5000 years without that. So it can't be essential. And then advertisements will not fool you.

So very often our thinking, even though we think we are fine Christians because we know so much of the Bible, we can sing all the songs. You are not spiritual if your mind thinks like the world thinks. And you will not build a spiritual church just because you sing certain type of songs or you preach a certain doctrine.

A spiritual church is built by people whose mind is thinking like the way God thinks. So the whole purpose of God giving us the scriptures, the Holy Spirit, I will tell you this, is to change our way of thinking. And you become spiritual when you started focusing on the things that God sees are important in your life.

And when you lose interest in the things which the world considers important. You say well that doesn't matter. I want to focus on the things that God considers important.

Then I am a spiritual person. And each of you can evaluate yourself. You give marks to yourself.

And there is a very simple way to do it. You can either write it down or do it in your mind. What are the things which the world considers very important? Number one is money.

And pleasure. For many worldly people it doesn't matter if the pleasure is sinful. Pleasure.

That's why there is so much craze on sex. It doesn't matter whether it is outside of marriage or inside of marriage. I want to have it.

And I say that's why pornography has become so popular. It's a billion dollar industry. Because people think this is wonderful.

Even if I am not physical, I can get mental pleasure out of watching pornography. It's a pleasure I get out of it. And if I think that is important, I am a worldly person.

God has created all these things. God has created sex. He created money.

But He never expects us to use them in a wrong way. Take the matter like the simple atom. You can split an atom and make an atom bomb that destroys a city.

Or you can split an atom and produce nuclear power that gives electricity to a whole city. Same thing. Used for a good purpose or a bad purpose.

Many things like that. You can have a knife. Is a knife good or bad? It depends.

What about if a knife is used to cut up a person's body? It depends whether it's a surgeon or a murderer, right? If it's a surgeon, he's bringing life. If he's a murderer, he's killing the guy. Even cutting a person's body with a knife can be good or bad.

It depends on intention. And so, it all depends on how we use what God has provided. God has given us many good things in the world.

But if God's given you a house, for example. A house is a very good thing. But if you use that house selfishly for yourself, then, of course, you haven't understood why God gives you something.

When I see that God gives me so many things, not just for myself, but that I can use it for God in some way, then I've understood the purpose of God's gifts for me. Then I've learned to look at things the way God looks at it. And it's been one of my prayers for many years.

I look at the life of Jesus on earth. I believe that not only was Christ sent to earth to die for our sins, but he was sent to earth to show us how God wanted man to live. And that's been a tremendous encouragement to me, just to discover that one thing.

Most Christians only know Christ came to earth to die for our sins. True. There's only one part of the truth.

He also was sent to earth to live in a certain way, to show us how God wanted man to live. That's why he had to be tempted like us. Otherwise, why should he be tempted? If he came only to die for the sins of the world, he didn't have to be tempted at all.

He was tempted to show us that as a man you can also overcome like I overcame. And so then I try to think, what are the things that Jesus valued? I never find him grumbling or complaining about any earthly thing. I never find him in a bad mood or depressed.

Because his father was always on the throne. Once he told his disciples in John 16, I think it's verse 32 or something, you will all leave me tonight, but I'm not alone. My father is with me.

Imagine his closest people running away from him. And he said, that's okay. You run for your lives, but my father is with me.

He was never discouraged. And I've learned something from that. The only thing that matters is God with me or not.

Then it doesn't matter if everybody else forsakes me or accuses me. Jesus once said, if they called me Beelzebul, prince of devils, why are you disturbed if they call you by bad names? I'm the head of the house and they called me the prince of devils. If they call you bad names, it just proves you're a member of my family.

I say, hey, then why am I disturbed if somebody calls me a bad name? I'm a member of Christ's family. Why is it these things disturb us? Because we care so much for a man's opinion. I remember when I was a young person and I started preaching, I would be disturbed if I saw somebody in the congregation who I felt was on a human level superior to me, whether clever or older or whatever it is.

I would feel intimidated. When I was young, I was only 23 or something and I had to speak to them. I felt if I'm intimidated by the people who sit in front of me or I care for their opinion, I'll never be a servant of God.

Because the Bible says, if I seek to please men, I cannot be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1.10 So I said, how to overcome this? And I got a wonderful verse that the Lord gave me. It's in Isaiah chapter 2. Isaiah 2 and verse 22.

It's easy to remember. 2, 2, 2. Isaiah chapter 2, verse 22, it says, Stop regarding man whose breath is only in his nose. Don't care for a man whose breath is in his nose.

And then I saw, I looked at it like this. I said, this fellow is a pile of dust. Because you know, man was made from dust.

But he's got breath in his nose, so we call him a human being. The moment God takes away that breath, give him a few years and he'll become dust again, right? So, the way I got it was this. When you had to stand before, you had to preach to a crowd of a thousand people, just look at them as one thousand lumps of dust in front of you.

Some are white, some are brown, some are black, piles of dust. Because the moment I take away their breath, that's what they're going to be. That liberated me, believe it or not.

How many of you would be nervous if you had a thousand piles of dust in front of you, and you go to the beach or something, and there's a lot of piles of dust, and you have to speak to them? Oh, you'd feel quite free, right? When you see people as God sees them, you won't be afraid of man. I said, Lord, I want to look at money the way Jesus looked at money. He never ran after it.

He used it. As a carpenter, he worked and earned money to support his family. So I believe I can work and earn money to support my family.

But he never got disturbed if somebody stole his money like Judas Iscariot. He didn't go fighting with him or take him to court. I said, Lord, I want to be free.

I don't want to run after it. I want to use it, make it my servant, but not make it a big thing in my life. What about human opinion? Jesus never bothered about human opinion.

People called him Beelzebul. He said, okay, you're forgiven. If I can look at a man who's called me the devil, and say, brother, you're forgiven, it's okay.

It doesn't disturb me one bit because his opinion is unimportant. I mean, to me, it's like if I walk down the street and a dog is barking, am I concerned that what does that dog think about me? I'm not bothered what that dog thinks about me. And I realize that a man's opinion is as worthless as that dog whose opinion about me is unimportant.

I don't think any of you are concerned about what some dog thinks about you, right? Do you know that a man's opinion is no more important? Unless it was a godly man, then it would be a matter. Because, for example, if the Apostle Paul were living in Bangalore and I would want to know what he thought about my spiritual life because his opinion is more likely to be closer to God's opinion because he's a man of God, I would value that. So if there was a man whom I really respected as a man living close to God, I'd say, boy, his opinion may be of value because he may be able to give me an idea of what God thinks about me better than I can think myself.

But other than that, I don't care if a man's very clever. If he's not godly, his opinion is worth nothing. So what I'm saying is, there's so many ideas that we have in our mind which we think are not worldly, but they are worldly.

Just because you don't watch movies or you don't watch useless TV programs, it doesn't mean you're free from the world. If the opinion of men means a lot to you, you're a worldly person. If money is not your servant, but your master, you're a worldly person.

I'm not saying money is unimportant, but money must be a servant. If you have a lot of money, that's okay. It's like having a lot of servants in the house.

But don't let the servants take over the house. I mean, if you employ a maid servant to work in your house, that's fine. It makes life easier for you.

So if you have money, it makes life easier for you. But if you let that maid servant take over the house and tell you what to do, hey, that's wrong. Money is a good servant, but a very bad master, like fire.

You keep fire in the stove, it's fine. You keep the fire in the fireplace, it's fine. But you let fire burn up the house, it's finished.

You've ruined yourself. That's what happens when money becomes everything in your life. It's like the fire has burnt up the house.

But fire is a good servant. We need fire, otherwise you won't be able to cook food. So I say you need money to live in the world, but make sure it's your servant and not your master.

So there's so many things which we find, what does it mean to overcome? To run this race and overcome like Jesus overcame and reached the throne of God. It means to place the same value on things that Jesus placed on them. One of the great tricks of the devil is to make us think something is very important.

You can't live without it. And the moment you get that idea, it's very easy to sin. If the devil convinces you to have a lot of money, it's very important.

You'll do anything to get a lot of money and you'll fall into sin. Or if he tells you that sex is very important, you can't live without it. You'll very easily fall into sin.

Pornography or something else because the devil has convinced you this is a very important thing. You've got to call the lie of the devil and say it's not an important thing. If God gives it to me, I use it.

If God allows you to be married, you can have it. Sex, if he doesn't allow you to be married, you don't have it. That's it.

Money, if God allows you to have a lot of it, you keep it as your servant. If he doesn't allow you to have a lot of it, God doesn't want you to have it. But it's not going to be the most important thing in my life.

The most important thing in my life is going to be my walk with God. That my conscience is clear, that I can hear his voice speaking to me and I can walk with him in a way that will please him. That's the most important thing.

Then I know I've got my values right. That's how we know whether you're growing up or not. What's the difference between a child and an adult? You try and give a \$100 note to a one-year-old child and a little rattling toy.

Which one do you think that child will take? Every child in the world will take that toy that makes a noise, not the \$100 note. But you offer the same to a 25-year-old and which one will he take? That's the way you find out who's grown up and who's not. And spiritually also, you find out when you choose the worthless things of the world and you don't want the things that are valuable for all eternity, you're a child.

Some rattle that makes a lot of noise is what you choose instead of something that's of eternal value. You're a baby. Now, it's alright.

In the beginning, we are all babies. Spiritually also. But we should be growing up.

There's nothing wrong in a person who was just born last year being a baby. But someone who was born 25 years ago, if you're still a baby, there's something wrong. You're 25 years old and you still prefer a rattling toy to a \$100 note? You haven't got your sense of values right.

The same thing with so many believers who say they are believers for so many years. They don't seem to have grown up. They have not overcome.

And then it's not going to be a strong church. So, every member of the church has a responsibility to grow up individually. You know, just like when a baby grows, all the legs grow equal length and the hands grow.

It's not that some part of the body just stops growing. There's a growth in all and as a church grows, every member has to grow spiritually. Every brother and sister, that's God's will.

So, each of us have a responsibility to, for the glory of God, that we can do our part to make a church strong. You don't have to be gifted. But you have to value the things that God values.

Have the same attitude to money, material things, honor, value of humility, clear conscience. And then we can do our part for the church, even if you have no gift of speaking. You can be a wonderful, strong member of the church.

God bless you.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/AelliCqaN9Q.mp4>

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