

Seek Total Freedom From Selfishness And Pride

by Zac Poonen

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Scripture: Acts 17:21, 2 Peter 1:11, Philippians 2:3, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Proverbs 1:7

Topics: "Repetition in Spiritual Growth", "Humility and Compassion"

Description

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Transcript

That was the Daily Devotion for today, 1st of January. And every day, if you go to cfcindia.com, you will see the Daily Devotion for that day, between 10 and 15 minutes. We also have it in a number of languages.

You know, in Acts of the Apostles, in Chapter 17, there's a little expression of the time when Paul was speaking in Athens. Athens, you know, is the capital of Greece. And Paul had gone there to preach the Gospel, and Athens was full of a lot of clever philosophers who had heard so many truths from different people.

And there's a statement about the people in Athens, which says in Acts 17, verse 21, Now all the Athenians, and also the strangers who visited there, used to spend all their time in always telling or hearing something new. They did not want to hear anything which they'd already heard before. It was a characteristic of the Athenians.

Curiosity for something new, not that they were going to do anything about it, but just some intellectual stimulation for something I've not heard before. And when I looked at a lot of Christians, and even Christian preachers, I find that they can be enslaved to that. Tell people something new.

Don't preach the same old message again and again. You know what the result of that is? I mean, it's like, if I've used this illustration, if a teacher in a first grade decided to have only one class on multiplication, okay, I spent 40 minutes teaching multiplication, that's it. Tomorrow we go on to another subject.

How many students would have understood multiplication? The secret of teaching, whether it's kindergarten or first grade, or PhD, is repetition. That's the only way you and I have ever learned anything, whether it's playing the piano or singing songs or arithmetic or anything. But yet when we come to the Christian faith, we don't seem to understand the reason for a lot of our shallowness is because we're not willing to hear the same thing again.

And that's why some people don't read the Bible regularly. They say, oh, I've already read it. Well, I'll tell you honestly, I've read through this Bible.

I've never kept account of how many times I read it, but I started reading it 63 years ago, and I still read it every single day. And I'll tell you, I get something new. I'd rather say something fresh, not necessarily something spectacularly new, but something that ministers to my heart.

It's like food. Imagine you mothers, the children said, I had bread yesterday. I don't want it anymore for the rest of my life.

I want something new every day. You'd be crazy. How have your children grown? They've been having the same food day after day, maybe not in exactly the same form, but basically the same constituents.

And they've grown healthy and strong. Now, all these things are parables that tell us we need the same thing again and again. But the Athenians were not like that.

They only wanted to hear something new. Always hearing something new, brothers and sisters, will not help you to grow spiritually. Now, Peter knew that.

So Peter writes in 2 Peter 1, when I say Peter knew that, the Holy Spirit knew that. And so the Holy Spirit writes through Peter in verse 12. Listen to this.

It's a very interesting verse. He says, I want you, first of all, verse 11, I want you to get an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, not sort of scraping in by the skin of your teeth into God's kingdom. You don't want Jesus to say to you, oh, so you finally made it, is it? No, you don't want to hear that.

You want him to hear, well done, good and faithful servant. You want to get into heaven by the skin of your teeth, scraping in, or with great joy in your father's heart. So he says, I want you to get, notice that expression, that you get an entrance into the Lord's kingdom abundantly.

That means you don't just scrape in. You come in triumphantly because you've accomplished something for God on this earth before you left. And the only thing, you're not boasting that I went to church every Sunday.

That's not an accomplishment. Not at all. The demons attend church every Sunday.

What does that mean? If it's a good church, I believe demons will be there every Sunday. So attending church every Sunday is not the main thing. So he says, in order for you to get this abundant entrance into God's kingdom, and I hope everyone here, this is my passion, that everyone here and every church I ever preach in, that all the brothers and sisters there will get an abundant entrance, that the Lord will say to you, well done, good and faithful servant.

And that's not by bringing many people to Christ. That depends on our calling. An evangelist brings many people to Christ.

As I've often said, we are members of a body, and different members have different functions. So you may not be an evangelist. You may not be able to bring so many people to Christ, but you may be one who has a gift of praying in secret, perhaps.

Nobody knows about it. Nobody will ever know about you until the day Christ comes, and it will be exposed in that day how much was accomplished through your prayers, though you got no honor on earth. So he says, in order for you to get an abundant entrance into God's kingdom, what am I going to do? Verse 12, I'm going to keep on reminding you about things you already know.

I'm going to repeat the same old message that you heard from me a hundred times. I'm going to keep on reminding you, even though you are already established in the truth. It's okay, you're established in truth, but I'll still keep reminding you because I don't want you to scrape into God's kingdom.

We need to be reminded again and again and again. And not only that, verse 13, as long as I'm alive, as long as I'm in this earthly body, I'm going to keep on reminding you. I'll never stop.

And not only that, after I leave, Peter says, after I die and go, I will ensure, verse 15, that you will still remember these things because I'll write them down and you'll have to keep reading them. Look at the passion that Peter had in verse 12 to 15. He says, I've already taught you that.

When I'm going to tell you that again, I'm going to keep on telling you as long as I'm alive. And after I go, I will remind you again and again of it by what I write to you. So please remember that as we come to a new year and finish our old year.

I mean, there's nothing special in God's eyes about December 31st and January the 1st, but it's a good way of, you know, evaluating ourselves. At the end of a year, we expect our children to be promoted to one higher class. 365 days.

It's God who ordained that the earth should go around the sun 365 days, and in that one circle, by the time we come back, the earth comes back to where it started, we expect our children to be promoted to another class. And we should also have the promotion to a higher class. I don't mean discovering some new truth, but a higher level of where we already are in the area where we are.

Greater love, greater faith, greater humility, greater compassion. It's like more knowledge of arithmetic, more knowledge of algebra, more knowledge of chemistry, more knowledge of physics, different areas, but a little more, a little more every year. That's how it should be.

The fruit of the Spirit increases in our life more and more. Our usefulness to God becomes more and more. Our knowledge of God, especially, becomes more, because knowing God is more important than serving Him.

Jesus said, This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. Remember, the greatest thing in the Christian life is to know God better. That is eternal life.

Not serving God, that comes out of it. And some people are not able to serve God because they don't have that much opportunity to travel around or move around. But knowing God, even if you're on a sick bed, even if you're paralyzed, you can know God for years, better and better and better, lying in a paralyzed bed.

So when we think of spiritual growth, knowing God leads to becoming more like Him. So let me turn to Philippians 2. This has been a great chapter for me for many, many years because there's some amazing truths here, particularly from verse 3 to 15. Philippians 2, verse 3 to 15.

To me, that's one of the most outstanding passages in the New Testament. Just like somewhat similar to that is Philippians 3, verses 7 to 17. In these two chapters, there are some tremendous passages which I would encourage you to meditate on, meditate on.

I meditate on them frequently. So here in Philippians 2, I've often said, if you don't have a Bible, you can live by this one verse for the rest of your life. And that one verse is Philippians 2:5. Have the same attitude in yourself that Jesus had.

That's it. You don't need any more verse for any situation in life. Whatever situation you may face in your office, difficulties at home, difficulties with your relatives, difficulties with your mother-in-law, have the same attitude that Jesus had.

That's it. It answers every single question. If you can find out what attitude would Jesus have in this particular situation, in some problem you're having at work, some attitude, decision you need to take in relation to money, have the same attitude that Jesus had.

That is the way of spiritual growth. And if you've determined in this coming year, Lord, I'm going to try and understand that a little more, how Jesus could give thanks when he was going to the cross. You know that? At the Lord's table, he gave thanks and broke the bread.

And so this is my body. I'm giving thanks to my Father that I'm going to be crucified. For us, it is very simple.

We pray and give thanks and break the bread. But what did it mean for Jesus at that time? He knew that within 24 hours, he's going to be hanging on a cross and dying. And that's what meant when he broke the bread and gave thanks.

Thank you, Father, for the opportunity that I can save this world, which is going to hell. Always give thanks. So here are a few things mentioned in relation to that.

I want to mention just two things in verse 3. The attitude that Jesus had was three. Do nothing from selfishness or pride. Jesus did nothing from selfishness or pride.

Had the same attitude Jesus had. Do nothing from selfishness. Do nothing from pride.

Now, don't just skip over that. I have not arrived there. I'll tell you that.

There's a lot of selfishness in my pride. Selfishness and pride in my life even now. It's a lot less than it was last year.

Much less than what it was 10 years ago. And hopefully much less than what it was 50 years ago. But it's still there.

The only day I can say all pride and all selfishness has been completely eliminated from me is in the day when Christ comes back and I will be like him. We shall be like him only when he comes. But that doesn't mean we should sit at the same level.

Defeated, defeated, defeated, selfish and proud till the day he comes. No. We should cleanse ourselves.

2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1. We all know that there are tremendous promises in Scripture. The most wonderful promises of all, especially in the New Covenant, New Testament. And keeping that in mind, let me say to you 2 Corinthians 7 verse 1. Having these promises, beloved, what should we do? Cleanse ourselves from all, all, that's a big word, all.

It will take a lifetime. From all the defilement of flesh and spirit, of our outward life and our inner life, of selfishness and pride. Cleanse it completely.

Perfecting holiness in reverence for God. Perfecting holiness. It's like you want your child who's in the kindergarten or grade 1 to go all the way to the top and even go beyond that to PhD and post-doctoral studies.

Perfecting holiness in reverence for God every day. Reverence for God is the basic requirement for wisdom. You know, Proverbs says, the fear of the Lord or the reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom.

The ABC of wisdom. So the more and more we want to grow in wisdom, which is in the likeness to Christ, I must have a reverence for God at every point, every day, to live in reverence for God. That means, I'm not going to say that because I can't say that if Christ was right here.

I can't speak like that to my wife or a husband or to that person who hates me. If Christ were here, even the guy who hates me, I will not speak like that to him. Reverence, you know, to speak, to revere God is to recognize that Christ is there with you if you're born again.

And it's one of the things that the Holy Spirit does. And so I see it. I remember the days when I was born again, but not filled with the Holy Spirit.

And what happened to me after I became filled with the Holy Spirit was not perfection. But I'll tell you one thing. I became more aware of the fact that Jesus is there.

And I was immediately aware I can't do that. Christ is here. Or I'm about to say something.

I can't because Christ is here. Do you see that? And you find the power to withhold yourself from speaking those words you would normally speak or doing what you would normally do? Because the Holy Spirit has brought the presence of Christ there. Then you'll be able to do everything, little by little by little, free from selfishness and pride.

So we need to be immensely thankful to God for all that he's done for us in the past year. But as you think of progress in this year in reverence for God, let me encourage you to concentrate in two areas. Selfishness and pride.

That's what it says there in Philippians 2. Let this attitude be in Christ Jesus. Do nothing from selfishness, nothing from pride. That's a goal.

Paul says, I haven't attained it, but I'm pressing towards that mark. It's good to have an understanding of what is my goal. Yeah, this is my goal.

I want to come to a life where I do zero from selfishness. I speak zero out of selfishness. I think zero out of selfishness, and I think zero out of pride.

I speak zero out of pride, and I do zero out of pride. See, the reason Adam fell was selfishness and pride. Adam and Eve, pride.

The Lord said, don't eat from that tree. It's a very small thing. You can eat from all the other trees, but don't eat from this.

And Eve felt, well, it can't be that bad. That's pride, to think that you know more than God. That is pride.

When God says, don't do something, and you think, yeah, it doesn't matter if I do it. That's thinking that you know more than God. It's conceit.

And later on, when the devil came up to her and said, you know, if you take part in this, you'll be like God yourself. Do you know that that's what the devil tempted Eve with? In Genesis 3 and verse 5, you will be like God. And in Eve's heart came a thought, boy, I can be like God.

Let me take it then. That's the same sin that made the angel into the devil. You know that Satan became Satan by wanting to be like God.

You know, when you, it's possible sometimes to act like God. I remember hearing a story of a woman who said, my husband thinks there are only two perfect people in the universe. One is God and the other is himself.

Because he acts as if he never makes a mistake. Never apologizes. The person who never apologizes, God never apologizes.

And a human being who never apologizes ever must be thinking he's also God. We don't realize how subtly pride comes in. A difficulty to say, I've asked many people, brother, do you ever apologize to your wife? Yeah, they say sometimes.

Okay. Do you apologize quickly when you know you've done something wrong? No, they say it takes a little time. I say at least before sunset, because the Bible says don't let the sun set on your anger.

It's a sort of outer time limit God has given. The best is immediately. I mean, it's like saying if a thorn gets into your foot, at least take it out by sunset.

The best is take it out immediately. That's up to you. A sensible person takes it out immediately.

If you're angry, apologize at least by sunset before you go to bed. It's pride. It's only pride that prevents a person from saying to someone, I'm sorry.

That was my mistake. I want to do it better. If you don't believe me, next time you make a mistake, try saying it.

You'll find the words get stuck in your throat. I'm telling you, do nothing from pride. Do nothing from selfishness.

When Eve thought, it says she looked at the food. It was a delight to the eyes. And her mouth began to water.

And she began to take, ignoring the commandment of God. So let us learn a lesson from that. Jesus' entire life, he never did anything from selfishness or pride.

And that's the example. And say, Lord, please let me follow in your footsteps a little more this year. Amen.

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