

Six Verse of Our Vision

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of God's mercy in shaping our lives and interactions as a church community.

Duration: 59:32

Scripture: Matthew 7:1, Acts 20:35, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 11:31-32, James 2:13, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Church Vision", "Spiritual Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of staying true to the initial vision of a church, focusing on humility, mercy, faith, grace, and self-reflection. It highlights the need to maintain a clear vision, avoid pride, trust in God's provision, prioritize giving over receiving, and practice self-judgment to avoid harsh judgment in the final day.

Transcript

30 years ago, a little more than 30 years ago, it was God who decided to start a new church here. And very few of those who are sitting here were there 30 years ago. Very, very few.

And then we met in a home for a number of years. And then it was in October 1981, which is over 24 years ago that we started meeting in this building. And one of the things that has happened to many Christian churches through the years is they go away from the vision that they had at the beginning.

And that's one of the things we have to be focused on. Or sometimes the vision becomes, gets out of focus. You know, like when you see something projected on a screen through a projector, it can be out of focus and then you don't see it very clearly.

And that happens to many, many groups. And when we think of a church having a vision, it's not just one or two people. In the Old Testament, God's people were guided by usually one person, one king.

You read the history in the Kings and Chronicles that the king was godly, the nation went in a certain way. If the king was ungodly, the nation went another way. But in the New Covenant, Jesus came to give everyone the Holy Spirit, who opened their hearts to him.

And so the witness is not limited to one leader or one person. So it's important that all of us who consider ourselves to be a part of this church, evaluate ourselves as we begin another new year to see whether we're focused on some of the things that God spoke to us and taught us in those early days. And I believe

that God kept us from having a building to meet because he was more interested in building a body and a family than a building.

A lot of churches are taken up with building projects, and they get excited when they have their own building. Well, I'll tell you this, I was never excited when we had this building or when we built anything more on it, because I knew it had no value before God except as a convenience to meet together. We could just as well have met in a park or in the fields, but this is a little more convenient, that's all.

The thing that God always sees is, what is the vision of the people who constitute the church? One of the things we decided, and it was just a few of us who decided that at the beginning, was the verses that we're going to put on this building. And if you have noticed, we have six verses in this building. So I'm going to speak to you about those six verses, because those six verses were carefully chosen to represent certain things that we placed value on right from the beginning.

I don't think we had all six right at the beginning, but pretty soon we had all six. So I want to begin first with the verse that's just behind me. Be merciful to others, just as God has been merciful to you.

That's where we decided we must begin. Where do we all begin? We must begin with a recognition that God has been fantastically merciful to us. And I want to say to all of you, don't ever forget that all your life.

That's where we begin. That's where all gloom disappears. All the gloom is when we forget how merciful God has been to us.

All the hardness comes in our heart when we forget how merciful God has been to us. We must never forget that. People say, some people say, oh, have we changed our vision? Well, we haven't.

We put that verse up there 24 years ago to emphasize God's mercy. Now, if people haven't focused on that, that's their own fault. But that's what we proclaim.

God is merciful. He is full of mercy. Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.

As far as the East is from the West, so far he's removed our transgressions from us. And right from the beginning, we have proclaimed that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from not 99%, but all our unrighteousness. We have proclaimed from the beginning that if we walk in the light, then don't hide anything.

The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. His mercy is, his mercy endures forever. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting unto those who fear him.

So that's something that we must never, never forget. I just want you to focus on that because that's the first characteristic of God that you need to encounter. And I'll tell you something, after being a Christian for 47 years, that you need to encounter it till your dying day.

There's not a single one of us who can say that we have gone beyond the place where we need God's mercy. I certainly haven't come there. I need that till the day I leave this earth.

God's mercy, because as we get closer and closer to God and grow in the Christian life, we discover areas in our life which we never even thought were sin one year ago. I hope that's happening to you. If it's not happening, you're not growing.

bring in me a fantastic morning. Say, Lord, I was dishonoring you for 66 years in this area and I didn't even know it.

I'll tell you one thing. That'll make me a little more merciful to other people when I see them dishonoring God in some area. I say, maybe they don't have light.

Maybe they don't have light. I mean, if I didn't have light on some area for 66 years, isn't it possible that some other fellow doesn't have light in some other area, he's probably in the kindergarten. Even if I'm in the 7th standard, he's in the kindergarten.

And in a good school, I'll tell you something else. Even though they don't get a promotion every year, every day, they learn something new every day. Go and ask any student, did you learn something in school today which you didn't know yesterday? If it's a good school, the answer is yes.

That's how it should be in our Christian life. Is God less faithful than a school? Is there less to be learned in the Christian life than in education in a school? Do you believe that? Why is it that we are so sluggish? We have not appreciated God's mercy. You know, I'll tell you one thing, that God is a great rewarder of those who are thankful for whatever he does for them.

If we are not thankful for what God has done, we don't get much more from him. But if we are deeply thankful for the light he gives us, for his mercy towards us, for the earthly blessings he gives us, for help, for everything, we really, God rewards such people with something more. You remember the one leper? Ten lepers came to Jesus for healing.

A lot of people shout and cry out in prayer for some need to be met. Ten of them came to Jesus like that, lepers, and they were all cleansed. But one man decided, hey, I raised my voice when I was in need.

Why not raise my voice when the need was there? Only one man thought of that. And he came back and in a loud voice, it wasn't softly, he didn't whisper in Jesus' ear, thank you Lord. In the same loud voice with which he cried out, Lord heal me, with the same loud voice he cried out so that everybody could hear, thank you Lord for healing me.

And the Lord said, weren't there ten who were healed? Where are the other nine? And that fellow said, your faith has saved you. He got salvation in addition to healing. What did the others get? Healing.

Ten people got healed, nine of them went to hell after they got healed. One of them went to heaven. You know why? Because he was thankful.

Do you know what you're missing? Even if you're a selfish person, I'd say learn to thank God. If you want to get something. I mean, even if you're doing business with God, the best thing to do is to thank Him.

You'll get something more. I mean, that's not the best reason. It should be gratitude that makes us thankful.

But that's the reason why people don't learn something new. They're not grateful for what they've already given God. There are people who are not grateful for the church, where they learned so much of God.

They're not grateful for the things that they have heard, which transformed their lives, and protect their families. Who's the loser? Not God, not me, you. So, you know, let's first of all meditate on how merciful God has been to us, day by day by day by day, to teach us to be merciful to other people.

The Bible says, His mercies, Lamentations 3, I think it's verse 23, His mercies are new every morning. That means something new. It's like in school, we learn something new every day.

His mercy, something new about His mercy every morning. How does that happen? Because I get light on some other area in my life where I need God's mercy and forgiveness. There was only one man who walked this earth, only one man who never needed mercy.

That was Jesus Christ, because He was pure from day one. He never sinned. There was no sin in Him in any area.

All the rest of us, the best of us, need mercy every single day. I'd say every single moment. Don't ever forget that, brothers.

The reason why we put that verse right up at the back is because I discovered through the years of observing Christendom, please listen, that the hardest, most self-righteous of all the believers on the face of the earth I had met were those who pursued holiness. Not the worldly Christians. The worldly Christians were very merciful to others because they themselves are so worldly and sinful.

That's not difficult. They see some guy living in sin, they say, ah, that's okay, because they themselves live like that. But the hardest and the most self-righteous were those who preached holiness and who pursued holiness.

I saw that in individuals. I saw that in churches. And I thought, hey, we preach holiness.

We pursue holiness. We need a constant warning at the back of the pulpit. Be merciful to others as God has been merciful to us.

That's the only thing that will save us from self-righteousness, from being hard on others, from being judgmental, critical, finding fault, blaming others. All the wretched, demonic nature that we got from Adam, our forefather, we can begin to be free from all of that if we start with mercy. Towards all people, be merciful to your wife to begin with.

When she does wrong things at home, be merciful to your husband. When he does wrong things at home, unless God has not shown any mercy to you. Be merciful to your children when they do stupid things.

They are growing up. Be merciful to your parents when they make mistakes. I've been a parent many years, and I tell you, we parents make a lot of mistakes.

I've been a parent more than almost all of you here, and I'll tell you, we make a lot of mistakes. I want my children to be merciful to me. I want my wife to be merciful to me.

I made lots of mistakes as a husband. I want my brothers in the church to be merciful to me because I've made a lot of mistakes as an elder. Sure.

Show me a man. The only one who never makes mistakes is God. So the only one who never needs to admit that he's made mistakes is God.

But I'll tell you another thing. Please listen carefully. The people I have found on the face of the earth, including our churches, including our churches, who are so unwilling to acknowledge that they made a mistake, are the elder brothers in our churches.

Very difficult for them to immediately say, that was my mistake. There is 101 justifications in elder brothers because they're supposed to be holy, self-righteous snobs and Pharisees. And the longer you have been in this church, it's probably more likely that you will find it very difficult to admit, brother, I'm sorry.

That was my mistake. Think of when was the last time those words ever came out of your mouth. I'm sorry.

That was my mistake. To your wife, to a brother, to a sister, and then you will know what I'm saying is right. How your pursuit of holiness has made you a Pharisee and not like Jesus Christ.

You haven't understood mercy. And I'll tell you, you've been a tremendous loser all these years because you haven't grown. We grow when we learn to be merciful, when we appreciate God's mercy.

Okay. I've got to rush. I wish I could take six Sundays on this.

But the second verse we have right at the back there is if you fear God, you need fear nothing else. Fear is one of the great weapons of Satan. All over the world he controls people with fear.

Fear. What's going to happen in the future? What's going to happen next week? What's going to happen in your family? Is that pain cancer? All types of fears. What's going to happen to your children? I love that song, you know, where, which we sing about, they call it the song of the Lord, his name, Jesus.

How sweet to look at a little child and the joy and hope that he brings and to know that as this little baby faces an uncertain future, some of us get older, we die and move on and our children have to live in this world which is so unsafe. And we can commit our children to Jesus because he lives. We have hope that for the future.

You don't have a fear. Fear is something that we all need to be delivered from but we don't take it so seriously. Jesus said fear not as much as he said sin not.

You know that? In fact, I think he said it even more frequently because we all recognize that we should not sin. He told the woman caught in adultery, don't sin again, John chapter 8. He told the man who was lame for 38 years in John chapter 5, don't sin again otherwise you'll get a worse sickness than the one you got. Showing that sometimes sickness can be caused by sin, not always but sometimes.

He said to people, don't sin, don't sin. But how many times he told his disciples, don't be afraid. I don't see him telling his disciples, don't sin because they knew that already.

Do I have to tell you brothers and sisters, don't sin? How many of you need the exhortation today saying, don't sin? I hope not. You already know that. But I tell you, most of us sitting here, if not all of us, need an exhortation which says, don't be afraid.

God cares for you. And if you want to live on this earth without any fear at all, that's Isaiah chapter 8 where it says in the Living Bible, if you fear God, you need fear nothing else. This verse by the way, which we, I mean everything is in scripture.

This verse is Luke, the one I quoted first is Luke chapter 6 and verse 36, be merciful just as your father is merciful to you. And the other is the verse on fear is from Isaiah chapter 8 verse 11 to 13 in the Living Bible. If you fear God, you need fear nothing else.

You need not be afraid of human beings who threaten you. You need not be afraid of sicknesses that you think you might get. You need not be afraid of what problems your children may face in the future.

You need not be afraid of financial problems. You need not be afraid that you'll be left alone and God won't care for you. No, you need not be afraid of anything if you fear God, if you reverence God.

And there are two types of fear of God. I think in the Old Testament, they feared God like a policeman or a judge. But the word is reverence.

And in the New Testament also, we are to reverence God. In fact, it says we are to perfect holiness. Second Corinthians 7 verse 1, in the fear of God.

Hebrews chapter 12, the last verse says, let us offer to God a service with reverence and awe and respect. But the same Hebrews 12 says, it is the reverence we give to a father. It says in the earlier part of Hebrews 12, we revered, respected our earthly fathers.

Who disciplined us. How much more we should respect and reverence God. So from that verse, I get this conclusion.

Why does a fear come into my heart sometimes? The answer is because I don't reverence and respect God enough. Because if you did respect and reverence God enough, you'd have no fear at all. You'd be completely free from fear.

You know your reverence and respect for God goes up and up and up and up and up and up and up. And your freedom from fear goes up and up and up and up. Your respect for God goes down and your fear increases.

Remember that. And I know many believers who respected and revered God a lot when they started out their Christian life. And one would think after 15, 20, 30 years, their respect for God should be more.

But it isn't. They have backslidden. They have started respecting God less.

I mean you ask yourself, are there sins you are defeated by today which you fought more wholeheartedly when you were first born again? You are radical against certain sins when you were born again. But you sort of compromised like because you see the other believers around you compromising you. That's because your reverence for God came down.

And that's a law. Then of course fear will increase in your life. So if you fear God, you need fear nothing else.

The reverse is also true. That if I don't fear God, then of course I need to fear a lot of things in the world. God's care for me is perfect.

I thank God for the revelation I got years ago in my life. That Jesus was my elder brother. And I was a younger brother of Jesus according to Romans 8, 29.

And then I read a lot of other verses where Jesus said that God was better than all earthly fathers. And then I thought, well I'm a father. Did I treat my younger sons any different from my elder son? Did I give privileges to my elder son which I didn't give to my younger son as far as I can remember? No.

I was totally fair to all my sons. Is God better than me? He is. And if Jesus is my eldest brother and his first born son, then like the Bible says, then everything he did for Jesus he'll do for me.

That was a fantastic revelation. And as he cared for Jesus, he will care for me. That's why Jesus lived his earthly life without any fear.

He was tempted just like us. If you ask me this question, was Jesus tempted by fear? What's the answer? One person is sure. I don't know about the others.

The answer to that is, are you tempted by fear? Answer that one. Are you tempted by fear? It's true. Was Jesus tempted like you and me or not? I have no problem believing he was tempted by fear.

Was Jesus tempted by the love of money? You know the answer. Were you tempted by the love of money? You take anything. If you believe Hebrews 4, 15 that he was tempted exactly like me, but he never got afraid, but he never loved money.

Every single temptation that's ever come to you in your life that will ever come to you came to him, but he overcame and he said, follow me. And the reason was he revered his father. Hebrews 5, 9 says his prayers were heard because he, not because he was a son, but because he respected his father.

Some believers prayers are not heard because they don't respect their father. So it's not the fear of some judge or magistrate or policeman. No, God is not that to me.

Maybe he was like that in the Old Testament, Old Covenant. But now I have a father. Jesus said in the day of resurrection, he said something unique, which he never said before in all his life on earth.

He told Mary Magdalene, go and tell my brothers. Till then he had called them my servants and even went as far as saying my friends, but he never said my brothers. He couldn't say that.

He was very exact in his speech. But on the day of his resurrection, he could at last say what he always wanted to say, my brothers, that I'm going to my father and your father. Never did he use that expression, my father and your father.

It was always my father or in some other sentence, your father. But now he combined it. My father and your father.

Tell my brothers that I'm risen. Have you heard that? Have you heard that message? And God picked one of the worst sinners in Israel to proclaim it so that people don't think only holy people can proclaim it. Mary Magdalene.

Great. I'm tremendously encouraged by that. So if you reverence God, we need not fear.

God wants us to live on earth without fear because we believe that he cares for us. Okay, the third verse is here. All things are possible if you can believe.

And that Jesus said in Mark chapter 9 and verse 23. All things are possible to him who believes. All things are possible if you can believe.

Now, if I were to ask you a question like, are all things possible to God? Sure. Jesus said that in Matthew 19. With God, nothing is impossible.

By the way, how many of you know, just in passing, in what context did God say, would Jesus say nothing is impossible? Is it jumping 10 feet? High jump record or long jump 35 feet? Is that what he was saying or what is he talking about? Making a billion dollars or rupees or a trillion rupees? In what context did he say, with God, nothing is impossible? I'll tell you in Matthew 19. He told a rich young ruler, go and sell all that you have and come and follow me. He was not willing to do that.

And then Jesus turned to his disciples and said in verse 23, it's very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples heard this, they were astonished.

You mean someone who's rich can't enter God's kingdom? Then who can be saved? Now, you see, the world is full of people who like to act poor. If I were to ask you privately, are you rich? I think most of you will say, no, no, I'm not rich. I'm poor.

This is the hypocrisy that fills Christians. If I were to ask a person in the slums in Bangalore, what do you think of all these people who meet in CFC? Are they rich or poor? He'll say, Brother Zak, are you joking? Every single one of them is rich. But you don't believe that, do you? That's your pride.

But you know what the disciples felt? We're rich. You know, I've got fishing, I've got a net, and I've got a home, I've got various things. They were not hypocrites and humbugs like a lot of people today.

And that's why they got salvation. They were not hypocrites, you know, like a lot of people, I'm poor, I'm not rich. Go to God and say, I'm rich, Lord.

You've blessed me so fantastically. And in that context, you will see how difficult it is for you to be saved and enter God's kingdom. You don't think so, right? Because you say, oh, that verse doesn't apply to me.

When you read a verse like, it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, you skip over that verse and say, oh, that doesn't apply to me. I want to tell you, every single one of you, it does apply to you. Go and ask anybody who lives in the slum in Bangalore, if that verse doesn't apply to you.

It does. But when was the last time you admitted it? Did you ever in your life admit that you're a rich man? Tell me honestly, did you ever once in your life admit that you were a rich person? No. The devil fooled you with your hypocrisy.

Admit it today and say, Lord, I'm a rich person. I'm talking about earthly things. I'm not talking about spiritual things.

Don't spiritualize it. I'm talking about earthly, material things. You are a rich person.

And it is difficult for you to enter the kingdom of God. These poor disciples didn't say, oh, thank God, that doesn't apply to us. We are poor.

They were not hypocrites. They may have met many weaknesses, but they were not humbugs and hypocrites. They said, Lord, that applies to us also.

We are also rich compared to a lot of these beggars. Think of blind Bartimaeus. And Peter says, I am far richer than blind Bartimaeus.

Look at the beggars on the street. Aren't you richer than them? It was their honesty that saved them. And it is your dishonesty and hypocrisy that leaves you in your sin unsaved.

Go to God and say, Lord, I'm a rich man. And you said it is very difficult for rich people to enter the kingdom of God. And it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Then the disciples said, who can be saved? Have you ever said that, Lord? Can I be saved, Lord? I'm a rich man. Can I be saved? When was the last time or even once in your life that you ever went to God and said that? You see how the devils fool so many Christians? Oh, you're poor. You're poor.

Hypocrites. Go to God and say, Lord, I'm not poor. I'm rich.

I look at every beggar and every person in the slum and say, I'm a fantastic, I'm a millionaire compared to them. How can I be saved? And Jesus said, this is impossible for you. This is impossible for you.

But with God, all things are possible. God can even save a rich person like you. If you will acknowledge it first, that you're rich.

I did. And he saved me. I tell you, he saved me.

And I experienced the joy of it continuously. I'm a very, very happy person. When I see so many miserable faces, I say, I wonder whether these people are saved or not.

Salvation brings joy. And perhaps you're not saved because you never admitted that you're a rich person. You kept on fooling yourself.

I'm poor. I'm poor. I'm poor.

I'm poor. I'm poor. Expecting other people to give you handouts, etc.

Dear brother, but it's not only God that says all things are possible to the one who believes. Faith is such an important thing. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

And that's another thing we have stressed and stressed and stressed in this church. Not faith for material things first, but faith for spiritual riches. Faith first of all for forgiveness of sins.

And Jesus has forgiven them. And he says, I will not remember your sins anymore. He means it.

I believe it. I don't live, I mean, there's tremendous sorrow in my life for all the wicked things I did in my life. But there's no, you know, haunting guilt.

Oh, fear. Can I come before God? Can I come, will the devil get a hold of me because of what I did 20 years ago or what I did yesterday? If I have confessed, forsaken, walked in the light, of course I can take advantage of God's mercy, but the Bible says there's forgiveness with him that he may be feared. Psalm 130.

So, faith, first of all, that my sins are forgiven. That my past is blotted out. That even in all eternity there's no record of what I did because I repented and I turned and I turned wholeheartedly to God and I was ruthlessly, 100% honest.

I admitted my hypocrisy by pretending to be poor when I was rich. I admitted all the hypocrisy in my life. Honest, ruthlessly honest.

God loves honest people. He never helps humbugs and deceivers and hypocrites. Be honest with God.

That's the first thing. And then faith that whatever God has promised in his word, I will get. You can't get a son when you're 100 years old like Abraham because God didn't promise it to you.

No. You can't pull down the walls of a city like God promised Joshua. But I'll tell you what you can do, what he has promised to you.

Romans 6, 14. Sin will not rule over you. That's not for Abraham.

That's for you and me. Very clear. Why go to Deuteronomy and say he'll make you rich? Why go to those promises given to Israel? Why not come to the promises given to the church? Sin will not rule over you.

He has broken down the dividing wall so that he can make you one. One with your wife, one with your husband, one with your brothers and sisters. Those are the promises I want.

And I want to believe that it is possible. It will never be possible if I don't believe. You hear a word in the pulpit that no sin will rule over you and say, oh well.

It applies to some people. It doesn't apply to me. Well, I tell you, it doesn't apply to you because you don't believe it.

Or you say, well, I've been a slave to this for so long, even Almighty God can't deliver it. I agree. Almighty God cannot deliver you because of your unbelief.

You say, oh, but this is such as my anger, brother. You don't know my grandfather was like that. My father was like that.

And I just inherited it. Okay. Your son will also inherit it.

Your daughter will inherit it. Your grandchildren will inherit it. I tell you, your great-grandchildren will inherit it unless they break out of this wretched cycle of unbelief and say, no, I'm going to trust God.

I don't care if all my ancestors were angry. I'm not going to be angry because the Bible says sin will not rule over you. Believe it.

There are worse sinners than you who have overcome sin just because they believed. God's promise is true. Abraham honored God by saying it may be impossible for other hundred-year-old men to get children, but not for me because you promised me something.

And I say, Lord, there may be a million things that are impossible, but sin ruling over me, impossible because you promised sin will not rule over me. No sin, no judgmental spirit is going to rule over me because that's sin. No fear of demons.

No. Demons cannot touch me. No black magic can touch you.

Believe. If you believe you can overcome everything. You can be an overcomer.

Who is he that overcomes the world but the one who believes? It says in 1 John 5 verse 3 to 5. He who believes, the one who has faith is the one who overcomes. Not the one who determines and makes New Year resolutions, but the one who has faith. All things are possible to the one who believes.

And I'll tell you something. There are certain chronic sicknesses from which we could be healed if you believe. If you believe in God a little more than you believe in doctors.

I'm not against doctors. I thank God for doctors because they're also fighting against sickness. I believe in medicines because that also helps in fighting against sickness.

I believe in everything that fights against surgery, everything. But I say at the top of the list, medicines, new medicines, nurses, doctors. You know who's at the top? Who's fighting disease and sickness? God, not the devil.

So I'm just going to the top of the chain. I thank God for all these people. You know in a hospital there are orderlies and there are nurses and there are so many people up the chain and I hope you always see at the top is God.

That's what I see. I am thankful to all these people. Just like in a hospital I don't get rid of all the nurses and orderlies and say I only want the top doctor.

No, I use all of them. But I always remember at the top there's God, the greatest specialist of all. I want his opinion.

Tell me whose opinion would you rather take? The opinion of some junior nurse who got her degree last week or a senior doctor who's been experienced for 50 years, head of the department. Tell me. Shall we go a little higher up the chain and get the opinion of Almighty God? What does he think about that terrible sickness you have? I'm just encouraging you to go to the top of the chain.

That's all. And say Lord, I always went up to the second person. Now I want to go to the top and get your opinion.

What do you think about this? I have trusted God for healing many, many times in my life. Many, many times. God has never let me down.

I'm not saying that as long as we live in the world we'll never get sick. We live in a world which is under the curse. There are sicknesses, there are weaknesses for which I don't have an explanation.

There are believers who get sick. Elisha died of a sickness. But he was about 90 years old when he died.

But it's his. He died of a sickness which he never got healed from. He who raised the dead died of a sickness.

Yeah, God allows that sometimes. Paul was sick with a thorn in the flesh that he never got healed because to keep him humble. So there are reasons sometimes why God allows sickness and sometimes because of a world in which there is a curse.

We all suffer. You can't walk on this earth and say a thorn will never get into my foot. Neither can I walk on this earth and say I'll never get a cold, I'll never get a fever.

That's like saying I'll never get a thorn in my foot or I'll never injure my hand. Who can say that? I'll say that in heaven. But on this earth, there are many things that can happen, including sickness.

But I say when that comes, go to the person at the top of the chain. Access that person first, God, Jesus, and say Lord, touch me. Here's my life, Lord.

Here's my body. I only want to do your will. All things are possible if you can believe.

I'm just asking you to consider the possibility that you may have missed something in your life because you didn't believe. That's one of the greatest fears I have. Lord, if I stand before you one day and you tell me there was something I wanted to give you, my son, all your life on earth, but I couldn't give it to you because you wouldn't believe me.

And the Lord turns around and says, look at this man. He didn't have half the Bible knowledge you had, but he had faith in me. And look what he got in his life.

Let me show you the videotape of his life. And I look at the videotape of his life and say, Lord, you mean that guy with half my Bible knowledge got all that on earth and accomplished so much for you? The Lord says, yes. How is that? He trusted me.

And you gloried in your knowledge of holiness and knowledge of this and knowledge of that. But he trusted me and he got something. And you went to this doctor and that doctor and the other specialist and the other specialist.

This chap didn't have the money to do all that. He trusted me and he got healed. Is it possible? I believe we will hear such stories when we get to heaven.

That some people with half our Bible knowledge pleased God more. Because without faith, it is impossible to please him. All your Bible knowledge will not please God if you don't have faith.

The whole purpose of the Bible is not to give us knowledge. Faith comes by hearing. It's to make us trust God more.

The reason we are not holier is not because you're not more determined or disciplined. No, no, no, no. It's because you don't trust that he will write his laws in your heart and mind.

I thank God for the day which came in my life when I discovered that the new covenant was trusting God that he would overcome as I opened myself to him. He would kill the giants in Canaan and give me the strength to do it even though they look so mighty. He would overcome fear.

He would overcome sin. He would overcome everything. Trust him.

Okay, another verse here is God gives his grace only to the humble. A very important verse. Grace is something more than mercy.

It's one step higher. They didn't have grace in the old covenant. It says grace came through Jesus Christ.

But grace is not available to all. It doesn't matter whether you're a believer or an unbeliever. There's an unchanging law of God which is like the law of gravity.

God resists the proud but he gives grace to the humble. Right? Haven't we studied in physics all objects that are heavier than air drop? Which way do they go? Down. How many of you studied physics? Hot air rises.

You want a revision in physics? Hot air rises. It's a law. Hot air rises.

It's like that. God gives grace to the humble. He exalts them.

God resists the proud and pushes them down. It's a universal law. It doesn't matter whether you're a believer or an unbeliever.

You know, it's like the law of gravity. Supposing you go to the top of this roof and say, hey, law of gravity, I'm a believer in Jesus' name. I defy you.

I'm going to jump down. No, I'm not going to jump down. I'm going to fly off from this roof and you take a step down.

Law of gravity is not bothered whether you're a believer or not a believer. He says, my law operates the same. I don't care what name you have, how many years you've been a part of CFC.

It makes no difference. And even if you try to fly off from CFC's roof, you get pulled down. It's a law.

And it doesn't matter whether you're a believer or an unbeliever. If you're proud, God will resist you. It doesn't matter who you are.

It doesn't matter. Lord, I've been a believer 46 years. You're going to resist me if I'm proud.

Oh, yes. It's a law. Hot air rises.

If you humble yourself, God will give you grace. It's 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 5. God gives grace to the humble. He resists the proud.

Okay. Who are the people resisting you? The devil. Your lusts.

Some of you may have other people like your wife or husband and neighbors and enemies. I don't know. But these two apply to all.

The devil and our lusts. Imagine on top of that, if God says, hey, I'm also going to resist you. You think there's any hope for you? If God's keeping on pushing you back, you've got to be a fool to think you're going to make progress.

Why haven't you made progress more than you should have? Perhaps. Because God is also resisting you. Now think on the other side.

You know, I picture that verse in 1 Peter 5 verse 5 and 6 like this. If I'm proud, God comes in front of me and keeps on pushing me back. And if I'm humble, God comes behind me and keeps on pushing me forward.

And then does it matter who's trying to push me back? The devil, lusts, wife, husband, neighbors, the whole world. I've often thought of it like this. Lord, can you make me so bold and have such faith in your grace that even if all the six and a half billion people in the world oppose me, I'll just keep moving on in

victory.

I believe that. I only need almighty God on my side. And I'll tell you this, if you want almighty God on your side, one simple rule.

Humble yourself. Humble yourself always. Always go down.

That's the way Jesus went. Don't go the way the devil went of going up and up and up. Don't seek position, honor in the world or in the church or anywhere.

Say, Lord, my choice is to go down. I've experienced that for years. And I'll tell you a great secret for humility.

You know, it's very difficult to be humble when God blesses you. Shall I tell you how to be humble when God blesses you? Listen, if you will, to my advice. Don't compare yourself with human beings.

Compare yourself always with Jesus Christ alone. I'm telling you what I've tried to do for 46 years. I refuse to compare myself with human beings, even though the devil often tempts me to do it.

Even now, I discipline myself to compare myself with Jesus Christ. I cannot run this race looking at you or you or anybody. I can only run this race looking at Jesus.

Then I'll run. Otherwise I'll have resistance. Because I look at somebody who's worse than me and say, oh, thank God, I'm not like him.

I look at somebody in another denomination who doesn't have the light we have. Oh, thank God, Lord, I'm not like those people there. And I become a Pharisee immediately.

Or I look at somebody who's way ahead of me and get discouraged. Oh, God, I can't be like him. But when I don't look at any of these people, I don't get proud and I don't get discouraged.

I look at Jesus. There's enough to humble me because I say, Lord, I've got a long way to go. And I never get discouraged looking at Jesus because he always encourages me.

He says, I want to help you to be like me. So God gives his grace to the humble. Remember that.

Number five. It is more blessed to give than to receive. I sometimes wonder whether we should put that up in front.

It's more blessed to give than to receive. Because a lot of people, that's, you know, Acts 20 verse 35. You know, in this church, we have never taken an offering for 30 years.

No preacher in this church or in any of our churches is supported by the offerings of our churches. Everyone trusts God for their need or works and earns their own living like the Apostle Paul. And we and we know we preached against tithing because we say tithing is old covenant.

It's never preached in the New Testament. We believe in the Epistles. We're not old covenant Christians, but we have preached giving, which actually is more difficult than tithing.

I'll prove that to you. Supposing God says, choose one of these two. All of you choose one of these two.

Give me 10% of your income every month and I'll be happy with you. Or give me your eyes every day that you never, never look at or read anything that displeases me. Give me your tongue every day that you never speak a word that displeases me to your husband or wife or neighbor any day.

Give me your hands that you never do any sin with your hands from this day onwards. You never do anything wrong with your feet. Give me your feet that you never go anywhere where I don't want you to go.

Give me your passions that you don't have any passions which are outside of devotion to me. And you'll say, Lord, here's your 10%. Just leave me alone.

It's far easier. It's far easier to tithe than to give what Jesus asked us to give. I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God, Romans 12, 1, present your bodies, your eyes, your hands.

Give everything to God. And when you have given your body to God, which is the most precious thing, other little things like our time, our money, you say, Lord, it's yours. Tell me how to use it.

God won't say give it all away and live on the streets. No, he never said that to me for 46 years. He takes care of us.

But I'm not possessive. I don't want to be calculating. Okay, let me give you an English class now.

We finished physics. We'll come to English now. How many of you can spell the word, you know, a lot of people look miserable.

Can you all spell it? That's an easy word. It's not like some of these difficult English words. Miserable.

Okay, all the smart people tell me the first five words, five letters in miserable. What's it? Got it. Okay, now question.

Why are you so miserable? Got the answer. It's an English class, by the way. Are you a miser? All misers are miserable.

It's true. We need to recognize that. Grumpy, misers are usually long faced.

They always think of what they can get. They come to the church even and they think of what they can get. They think there are other people poorer than me.

Other people are more needy than me. What can I get? Somebody gives me a gift. Oh, wonderful.

It may be far more than I need. Ah, but let me keep it. That's why you are miserable.

Right. We got our English lesson right this morning. Misers are miserable.

Okay. It's more blessed. What's the opposite of being miserable? Blessed by God.

Happy. Blessed means happy. You can be happier if you learn to give to God.

Give your life, your time, your body, your energy. Primarily. Your money, give to the poor.

Give to those in need. We never ask in this church for anything because we don't trust you. We trust God who is more reliable and as we honor him, we know he honors us.

In 30 years, we have never been in need. Okay. The last verse, most important.

1 Corinthians chapter 11. I think it's verse 32 which says there on the right there, if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. 1 Corinthians 11 31.

That speaks of the final judgment. One day we're going to stand before the Lord and I want the Lord to say to me, there's no judgment for you. Don't you want to hear those wonderful words when we stand before Christ? There's no judgment for you, my son, my daughter.

Zero. Lord, how is that? How is it I'm going to cut free in the day of judgment? The Lord will say, because of my word which said, if you judged yourself rightly on this earth, you would never be judged. You know what my goal is? When I stand before the Lord, your turn will come, my turn will come.

I picture this sometimes in my mind. I shut my eyes and picture the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus standing there and different ones being called and the Lord administering his judgment to each one of them and here I am. You know like you stand in a court and your turn is coming and all the criminals are being sent to jail and then your name is called.

You wonder what the strict judge is going to do to you. And I stand before the Lord and the Lord says, hey, your record is clear. Nothing.

Free. Wonderful. I want that.

You know the way? If we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. I believe that because it's God's word. That's why for so many years I've said in this church, stop judging other people because then you don't have enough time to judge yourself.

Okay? Judge not. Okay, now I'll tell you the reverse of that in Matthew 7.1. Do you want to be judged in the final day? How many of you want to be severely judged in the final day? I'll tell you how to do it. Judge other people.

Just spend your life passing your opinion about that person and that person and the other person and the other person and the other person and the other person. I guarantee, I'll give it to you in writing, your judgment will be pretty severe when Christ comes. It says in James 2.13, judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy.

So if you want to be judged, just spend your life as all the people in the world have spent it, judging others, passing their opinion, this person, that person, open your mouth as much as you like and tell this, this, this, this, this, this, this. I guarantee you'll be judged. The opposite is you'll never be judged.

If you say, Lord, I've finished with this wretched habit of judging others, I'm going to judge myself from now on. Let's pray.

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