

Thankfulness - Another Mark of Growth

by Zac Poonen

Christians should strive to live a life of thanksgiving and praise, and be free from grumbling and complaining, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Scripture: 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Thankfulness", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a spirit of thanksgiving and praise in our lives as we journey towards a heavenly life. It highlights the need to judge ourselves, cleanse ourselves from grumbling, complaining, and other sins, and progress in faith from one level to another. The ultimate goal is to have a heart that is constantly thankful, even in the face of challenges, trusting in God's goodness and sovereignty.

Transcript

In heaven, they're always singing about Jesus' death on the cross, and we're going to sing it for all eternity. But the interesting thing is, it says in Revelation 5. One of the purposes of the book of Revelation is to tell us what heaven is like. See, a lot of Christians study the book of Revelation to understand what's going to happen in the future, what's going to happen in the world, and the tribulation, and the Antichrist, and all that.

Well, that's also mentioned there, but I don't believe that's the primary purpose of the book of Revelation. The primary purpose of the book of Revelation is to show us what heaven is like. And as I've studied it, it gives us seven glimpses of heaven, and every single time, in every one of those glimpses, they're just praising the Lord all the time.

There is no grumbling in heaven, there's no murmuring, there's no complaining, there's no unbelief. It's only pure praise and worship. And, you know, we are on a journey from not just physically, geographically, earth to heaven, but more from the life of earth, or the life of this world, to a heavenly life.

There's a growth, and one way we can discover whether we are making progress along that path, is by asking ourselves whether there's a little more spirit of thanksgiving and praise in our life as each year goes by. Because, you know, the world is full of murmuring and complaining. The whole world is full of murmuring and complaining.

And in the midst of that, God places us. Let me show you that verse first. In Philippians, in chapter 2, we've been thinking since last Sunday about, you know, this church has been going for five years, and what is the evidence of growth? And last Sunday, we thought about humility.

And those of you who are not here, you could go to the website of this church and hear that message. But here in Philippians 2, it says in verse 14, do everything, all things, it's no exception, without grumbling, or disputing, or complaining. It's a wonderful way to live.

Imagine what your home will be like if nobody grumbles or complains in the home. We can't expect that from children. Children haven't come to that place where they are free from grumbling, so we'll permit them to grumble and complain.

But the adults in the home should try to get over it. And it's a sad thing that Christians, who've been Christians for many years, there's still a lot of grumbling and complaining and disputing in their life. And to me, that's not the sad thing.

The sad thing is they're not disturbed by it. I say, the important thing is not whether you fall into sin. The important thing is, what is your attitude when you fall? That determines whether you're going to be free from it.

We may all fall into sin. But there are folks who when they fall, have such a, I mean, revulsion and sorrow, that they slipped up and fell. They're the ones who make progress.

The others take it casually and say, well, we're human, it happens. Well, you'll never make progress. You'll be like that all your life.

So when I see a word like, do all things without grumbling and complaining. And he goes on to say, so that, I mean, this is the way, he says, that you prove that you're a child of God. A blameless, innocent child of God.

So nowadays, you know, most evangelical Christians, they say, you prove you're a child of God by saying, yeah, I accepted Jesus Christ so many years ago into my heart and I got baptized. Good. What came out of it? Did something good come out of it? I mean, to go through a ritual of saying, Lord Jesus, come into my heart.

A lot of people say that. But if there was a, if it was genuine, there would be some growth from there. I know in my own life, you know, I grew up in a very God-fearing home where I heard the gospel from childhood.

And I must have asked Jesus to come into my heart about a hundred times, from the age of 13 or something onwards. Many times. I really don't know, even today, which of those times was the right one.

But I know one of those times was the right one, because when I was 19, God gave me an assurance that I was saved. From one verse in scripture, John 6, 37, Him that comes to me, I'll never cast out. And I said, Lord, I've come to you a hundred times.

The Lord said, I never cast you out. You've got to believe me. That was 57 years ago.

I just dropped an anchor and I believed. By simple faith, He had accepted me. But I know one thing, in all those years of, five, six years of tossing about, am I, am I, has He come into my heart? I'm not sure.

I'm not sure. There was no growth. As long as you're not sure that Jesus has accepted you, there will be no growth in your life.

You will oscillate. So that's very important to be sure. Christ has come.

It's important. But one mark of growth, as I see here, is that we get increasingly free from grumbling and complaining in our life, because that's a mark of faith. That means I believe that God's working things for my good.

It may not be very pleasant for me, but it's for my good. So it says, when you do everything without grumbling and complaining, thereby you prove yourself to be blameless and innocent children of God, without reproach, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. So in the context, what is it that makes this world a crooked, perverse generation? It's full of grumbling and complaining.

That's what I understand from the context of it, that this world is a crooked and a perverse generation, because everybody is grumbling and complaining about something or the other. And you can see that all around you. You can hear it in your offices.

You can hear it when you mingle with your relatives and friends. You're always grumbling and complaining. If it's not something in their life, it's something in the government, or something which other people are doing, or new laws and government rules and everything else.

It never ceases. And in the midst of such a grumbling and perverse generation, it says here, you shine as lights in the world. I want to encourage you, I don't want you to go quickly through these two verses, but take time when you go home to meditate on these.

These are not popular verses for people to memorize. You go to churches that memorize verses, these are not the verses they usually memorize. Do all things without grumbling and complaining, that you may be lights in the world.

But that is what makes me a light in the world. And I remember, even after I was born again, I used to grumble and complain on lots of things. And once you get married, you've got more things to grumble and complain about.

Because you find a lot of things in your partner which is not like you. Both ways. And sometimes it's inward grumbling and complaining, it's outward grumbling and complaining.

But time came in my life and I got fed up with that. And I said, Lord, this is not the way to live. This is not the way for a Christian to live.

I don't want to be a Christian who just goes to church and sings songs of praise out there, and it's quite a different life at home. Then I'm inconsistent, I'm a hypocrite. So I want to urge you to take this seriously.

If you sing and praise the Lord on Sunday morning, and go home and live like everybody else in the world, you have to say to yourself, Lord, I am a hypocrite. And when I said that about myself, I began to get deliverance. But as long as I said, no, no, no, I'm okay, I deceived myself.

So, here is the way in which I can be a light in the world. I picture it sometimes like this, that God from heaven looks down on this small planet called earth, and he looks at it from heaven, and he sees the whole earth is full of darkness. Grumbling, complaining from every corner of the earth, from the slums to

the billionaire's homes.

Something or the other to grumble and complain about. And in the midst of this dark world, here and there, there's some spots of light. One home, where they don't grumble or complain.

Here, another one, a few thousand miles away, another one. Can you imagine the delight it brings to God's heart? Oh, here's a person, here's one brother, here's the other sister. And if you really want to bring delight to God's heart, and you're grateful to all for all that Jesus did for you, here's one way you can show your gratitude.

Say, Lord, I want to be a light in this world for you. I want to be one from whose mouth and from whose spirit will never come anything of grumbling or complaining. Because I believe in a loving Father, who may not have done things as I think best, but who has done things perfectly, according to His wisdom, which is superior to mine.

And who makes everything work together for good. Now, we would think that if this is such an important habit to acquire, why didn't God list it as one of the Ten Commandments? There's no rule in Heaven that there should be only ten commandments, there could be eleven. God could have made the eleventh commandment, Thou shalt not grumble or complain.

Why didn't He do that in the Old Testament? Why didn't He add that which is so important? Because it was impossible under the Old Covenant for anyone to live that life. We can compare the Old Covenant to the Stone Age in human history, where they didn't have electricity. Electricity makes us run so many things on earth, our home.

A lot of things run because of electricity. Almost everything runs because you have electric power. Can you imagine the things that would stop in your home and not exist if you just didn't have electricity? Just take out electricity from the home and many things disappear.

It was like that in the Old Covenant, to use an illustration. They couldn't have washers and dryers and things like that and there was no electricity. And therefore they could not live a life in the Old Testament when they didn't have the Holy Spirit filling their heart.

The Holy Spirit could not live in a human heart that was dirty. Impossible. That's why the Holy Spirit could not come into anybody's heart in the Old Covenant.

And human hearts got cleansed only after Jesus died and shed His blood on the cross. I don't know whether you've noticed this, that in the Old Testament it always speaks about sin being covered. Forgiven but covered.

Not cleansed. Psalm 32 says, Blessed is the man whose sin is covered. It's like the sin is there but God doesn't look at it.

It's covered temporarily because it could not be cleansed until Jesus came. When Jesus died and shed His blood, then there was a full atonement made for my sin. See God's a righteous God and even though He loves me as a father, He cannot violate His laws of justice like a judge cannot let his son go who's committed a crime saying, oh well I love you my son.

However much you love, you're a judge. God couldn't let me go just because He loves me. He's a judge and says, unless a full atonement is paid for your sin, I'm sorry I can't forgive you my son.

That's why Jesus had to die and pay that price so that now my heart can be cleansed. And there's only one condition for my heart to be cleansed and that's to be honest about my sin. The only sin in your life that will not be cleansed is the one you're not honestly willing to acknowledge.

You know if you keep saying I'm okay, you'll never be cleansed. The thief on the cross said I'm guilty. He was cleansed immediately and taken to paradise.

The guy on the other side felt he wasn't so bad. He said take me down from the cross. He went to hell.

What is the difference between the two? Just absolute honesty. That's the first thing God requires from us. Be honest about your sin and don't keep blaming the other person.

Adam, when God came to Adam and asked him, did you eat that tree? There was only two answers for it, yes or no. But he didn't use either of those two answers. He said my wife is a problem.

And as long as we are like that, we're just following Adam. The thief on the cross was the opposite of Adam. He said I'm guilty.

So to say Lord in me I find a lot of this darkness in the world. The darkness of grumbling and complaining. And we may have thought we are better than people in the world because we go to church on Sunday.

We read the Bible. We sing songs of praise. We are better than some of these people in other churches who haven't understood the new Covenant.

You know we can glory in our understanding. I find a lot of Christians really, as I've observed them over years, they glory in the fact that their understanding of truth is superior to some other group. It's a total deception.

Absolute deception. If I can sing better or understand better, it doesn't mean I'm a better person. In fact my responsibility is more to whom more is given more is required.

It's if my life has changed. If I grumble and complain, then I'm no better than somebody else even if my doctrine is, in fact I'm worse because I have a superior doctrine and I still grumble and complain. That guy is a non-Christian.

If he grumbles and complains, okay he doesn't know God. I claim to know God. And only I claim to know God.

I say I'm not like some of these dead denominations. I'm in a good church. We call ourselves a new Covenant Church.

Wow. And I grumble and complain. Well, then the crime is more serious.

So I need to see that. That's why in the New Covenant, once our heart is cleansed, the Holy Spirit can come in. And when the Holy Spirit comes in, He helps us to free.

Notice that before, you know, if you, I always say read scripture in its context. So before he says do all things without grumbling and complaining, which is an impossible command for a worldly person. In fact,

most Christians also don't live by that.

Where can you expect a worldly person to live by that? There's a verse that says before that, verse 12 and 13. And apply verse 12 and 13 to this command. Okay.

So then my beloved, just as you've always obeyed me, verse 12, not as in my presence only but in much more my absence. Work out your salvation. Okay.

And I want to take it in this context. Work out your salvation from grumbling and complaining and disputing. Try and get saved from it.

With fear and trembling. I want to be saved from grumbling, complaining, disputing, this way of life that characterizes the rest of the world I want to be free from it because that's how I'm going to be a child of God, blameless, innocent, as a light in the world. So I want to work out my salvation.

I have to do it with fear and trembling lest I fall into it. It's like walking along a narrow path with the deep ditches on either side. There's grumbling one side and complaining the other side.

I want to avoid both these ditches. So I walk with fear and trembling and then it says, I'm not alone in this. God is at work in you.

That's the Holy Spirit. Whenever the Bible speaks about God working outside us, outside of us, working everything for our good, that's a father in heaven working for our good. Whenever it speaks about God working inside us, it's always the Holy Spirit.

God is at work inside you. To do what? To make you will and do His good pleasure. So His good pleasure is that I should do everything without grumbling and complaining.

That's His will. And He's working in me to desire that. And I want to say to all of you who hear this word now, if you find in your heart right now a desire for this life, Lord, I'd like to have this life.

Not because life will be more pleasant at home, but because it'll glorify you. I've been dishonoring you all these years with the way I live. So it's not that I want this life because life will be more peaceful and pleasant at home.

No. But if I see that I've been dishonoring God by the way I have lived, and Lord I want to honor you. And if you find that desire coming in your heart to live this life free from grumbling and complaining and disputing and arguing, etc.

Let me tell you this, that is not from you. Don't take the credit for it. Because there are lots of millions of people in the world who have no desire to be free from it.

And if you've got the slightest desire to be free from it, it says your God is at work in you. To will means to give you that desire. Be thankful.

It's one of the proofs that God's working in your heart, in your conscience. That he's giving you a desire to respond to what you're hearing right now. Don't take the credit for it.

It's not from you. God is at work in you to will. That means to desire it.

And it's not only desire I need. I need ability. So that's the second thing God promises.

The same God who created that desire in you, will give you the ability to do this. But it's not automatic. If it were automatic, we'd all be like Christ right now.

Totally like Christ. We'd all be perfectly obedient. 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I mean, think of the planets. 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they're obedient to God. They don't disobey God for one split second.

But they've been programmed. God's programmed all the planets and stars. That's why they move in their orbits.

But he hasn't programmed us. He hasn't made us robots. If he made us robots, we would never grumble or complain.

Do you know that? If he took away just, if he took away one thing from you, your free will, that's all God's got to take away from you. Leave you exactly as you are in every way except take away your free will. You have no more choice.

You become a robot. I guarantee none of us will ever grumble or complain for the rest of our lives. We'll give thanks in all situations.

We'll never sin, but you'll never be holy either. You'll never be a sinner, but you'll never be a child of God. You can't be a sinner without free will.

You can't be holy without free will. It requires a choice. Programmed, robotic obedience is not holiness.

That's why God, you know, it's tremendous risk that God took to give Adam a free will. If all that God wanted was millions of obedient robots floating around in heaven, all he had to do was create man without a free will. But the very first thing you see in the Bible is as soon as he created man, he gave him a free will.

Choose. Do you want to obey me or disobey me? It is a big risk. And Adam chose to disobey.

And all of Adam's race, all the millions and billions of people born since, chosen to disobey God. But God would rather have, listen to this, it's an amazing statement. God would rather have billions of billions of people disobey him and go to hell.

If he can, out of that, get a few people, maybe a few thousands, who will voluntarily choose to live a pure holy life and bow and obey him, deny their own will every day, and seek to please him, and never grumble or complain, but only give thanks in the most difficult circumstances, that brings such tremendous glory to God that he was willing to let billions of people go to hell to get these few thousands. It's like, you know, when people dig for gold, they go down thousands of feet into the ground and bring up a whole lot of what looks like muck. And from that muck, they pick out the metal.

And even that metal is not gold, it's mixed up with so many alloys and they put it in, they wash it off with water and then they put it in the fire. Finally you get a little bit of gold out of all that tons of muck. And they feel it's worth it.

That's how all the gold in the world is mined everywhere. That's how they mine diamonds. From all that muck that they pull up from deep thousands of feet below the earth, in South Africa and other places, they

get a little bit of diamonds and they feel it's worth it.

That to me is a picture of how God's willing to let most of humanity disobey him and go to hell and destroy themselves, if he can get a few who will voluntarily, not as robots, not because they are programmed, voluntarily who have the choice, who have the opportunity to disobey, but do not disobey. Who have the opportunity, plenty of opportunity every day, to grumble and complain about our circumstances and about people around us, but choose not to. Do you know the delight it brings to God's heart? God works in us, cooperating with us, but it says here we got to work it out.

What God works in, verse 13, we have to work out, verse 12. That's how we become holy. If it was only God's work, as I said, we'd all be holy.

And if it was only our work, none of us would be holy. Impossible. None of us can ever attain even one millionth of God's standards.

So God has to work in us, verse 13, and we work it out. That's called a full salvation. It's called working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

I mean, if only we knew that the damage that sin causes us, even one sin, I tell you, we detest it and hurt it, hate it. If only we knew that one single time I grumble or complain, it does some damage to me. It's not visible so often.

It's like people who smoke cigarettes. If they could see, every time they smoke a cigarette, what's happening to their lungs. I mean, they may die of lung cancer 40 years later.

Okay. But if they could see every single time they smoke, maybe they're smoking 10 cigarettes a day, and every time they could see a picture of what's happening in their lungs, getting a little darker, a little more polluted, destroying a little bit of their lungs, I tell you, they'd all stop smoking in no time. Or people who drink alcohol, even what's called decent types of alcohol, they could only see what it's doing to their liver.

Every time. I mean, they may die 40 years later, much before that they should die. But if they could see what's happening to their liver when they drink one little bit of alcohol, then a little bit, they would all stop drinking it.

At least to live long enough to take care of their children, if not for any other reason. At least to live long enough without getting sick and being hospitalized. And if only we could see the damage that one sin, like that one little peg of alcohol, or that one cigarette, if only we could see the damage it does to our soul and our heart, we'd stop sinning quickly.

But, just like those foolish people, most Christians are foolish too. They don't realize that everything God has said is for my good. His commandments are for my good.

He loves me, that's why He's given me commandments. That's why He tells me these things. And so that's why I'm saying that when you go to the book of Revelation, you see seven pictures of praise in heaven.

They're always thanking God. There's not an atom of murmuring or grumbling or complaining. So, as I said at the beginning, I know I'm getting closer to heaven in my life, if I'm becoming free from grumbling and complaining, and if I'm having a spirit of thanksgiving, and even more wonderful, if I can give thanks for things I cannot understand.

That's even more wonderful. You know, to give thanks because you got a raise or a promotion in your job, any foolish person in the world can do that. You got a healing or you got a miracle.

Anyone in the world can give thanks for that. You don't need to be special. But, if you can give thanks when things are not going the way you want it to go, not by some Spartan way, gritting your teeth and saying, okay, I'm going to give thanks.

Not like that. But, saying, Lord, I'm giving thanks because I believe in a Father in heaven who's making all these things work together in some wonderful way for my good, which I don't see right now, but which will work out for my good. Many things God allows in our life which look like even failures.

God has got a plan to work it out for our good. If He could see into the future, He'd see this thing that looks so bad right now is the very means by which He's going to work out something for my good later on. I love to tell the story of something that happened to my wife, if she'll permit me.

You know, she studied in probably the finest medical college in India, in Vellore, and her favorite subject in which she always got the best marks was obstetrics and gynecology. She was absolutely tops. So, when it came for a final exam in that, she did very well in the written paper, and then they have to go for a five-minute interview where they are tested with something practical.

So, they had to go to another town for that, and because her name began with A, she was top of the list to go for the interview. And the person who interviewed her was a very strong Hindu. I mean, the marks on her forehead and all indicated that.

And soon as she looked at Annie without any jewelry and a simple dress, she knew this is a Christian, and she hated her. And she spent the five minutes of the interview not asking anything about this patient or this sickness, just lambasting her for, you Christians think you're great, and this, that, and the other, and she was waiting for a test, and there was no test. This is just this.

And then the bell rang five minutes, and she hadn't even asked the first question. She said, you can go. She got zero.

She knew the answer. She knew that what was wrong with that patient and everything, but she got zero, because she was a Christian. And she was so disappointed.

Can you imagine failing in the subject when she was absolutely tops in? And so because of that, she had to do that again, and she had lost three months. So she had to stay on in Willow for three months. And guess what happened in those three months? I arrived there.

She wouldn't have been there if she had passed. Of course, it was a little later, because she, that three-month extended, she said, then she had to go a little later. So she had to stay three more months, and then I arrived.

When I heard how she had to stay on this three months, I said, I wish I could go and meet that Hindu examiner. I'd go and thank her with all my heart for failing. I'm just telling you how, what, she must have been so disappointed.

But think if she could look forward in the future, what's going to happen because of this failure. I'm going to stay on three months here and complete my course, and I'm going to meet the most wonderful man in the

world. I mean, that's only what she thinks.

The rest of you may not think so. I just say that for your encouragement. God is a good God.

Things that look so wrong, there's a song we sing, all is right that seems most, most wrong, if it be his sweet will. He always wins. Whose side is one of Frederick Faber's songs, you know, you guys should learn to sing, read some of Frederick Faber's poetry and songs.

He was a mystic, a great man. He is a man who wrote, prostrate before your throne, I lie and gaze and gaze upon thee. So he always wins.

Whose side is with God, to him no chance is lost. Ill that he blesses is our good and unblessed good is ill. And all is right that seems most wrong, if it be his sweet will.

All is right that seems most wrong, if it be his sweet will. So, that's what I mean by giving thanks for something which I can't see yet. It's Thanksgiving in faith.

That is another difference in the old covenant. In Psalm 106, we read like this, that when the Israelites left Egypt, Psalm 106 verse 10, he saved them from the hand of the one who hated them, that is the Egyptians. And the waters, you know, the Red Sea, verse 11, covered their enemies.

The whole Egyptian army was buried under the Red Sea. Not one of them was left. Then, the important word there is then.

After they saw their enemies buried under the sea, then they sang his praise. So, what is the difference in the new covenant? In the new covenant, it is before the enemies are buried under the sea, we sing his praise. I mean, if you are going to give thanks after your enemies have been buried, or your problems have been solved, well, anybody can do that.

That's an old covenant level of life. Then, they believed his words and sang his praise. But in the new covenant, it says, he has set a table before me in the presence of my enemies, my enemies are not buried.

Psalm 23 says, he has anointed my head with oil, and my cup runs over, even though my enemies are still there. And he sets a table before me in the presence of my enemies, saying, forget the enemies, I'll take care of them, let's have breakfast. He sets a table before me in the presence of my enemies, and my cup runs over.

And he says, it doesn't matter if the enemies are there, I'm not bothered, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Read Psalm 23 like that, that the enemies are right there, they have not been buried under the sea, they are there in the presence of my enemies. I say, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, and these enemies are not going to stop me.

That is new covenant life. Psalm 23 is a new covenant thing. So one of the things I saw in Revelation is, you know, so I was trying to tell you here, they believed his words, they sang his praise, that's what we read in Psalm 106.

So thanksgiving is one of the evidences of faith. They believed his words, and they sang his praise. Psalm 106.

In the old covenant they did it after the enemies were buried, after the problem was solved, after they got what they wanted. In the new covenant it happens before the enemies are buried, before our problems are solved, and when the enemies are still there, we sing his praise. But the principle is the same.

They believed his words, and sang his praise. If you believe his words, you'll sing his praise. It's when you don't believe his words, that you don't sing his praise.

So every time I'm unable to give thanks, there's something God has said which I don't believe. Now I want to say to you, this thanksgiving is a very very important mark of spiritual growth. And it's an important evidence of faith.

You know, we say we believe in Jesus. Well, if you do believe in Jesus, you should be growing in faith. And it says in Romans chapter 1, that our salvation is by faith.

But not only by faith, it's not just that we are saved by faith, it says in Romans 1 and verse 17, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous man will live by faith. Not just be saved by faith.

Saved by faith is the first step. We are born again by faith. Then it says, we live all the way up to the time we enter into God's presence.

We're going to live by faith and it's called here, faith to faith. Faith to faith means kindergarten to first grade. First grade to second grade.

Second grade to third grade. Third grade to fourth grade. All the way to PhD and post-doctoral and everything else.

This is the Christian life. Faith to faith to faith to faith to faith. It's endless till we see him face to face.

So, that's what it says here, from faith to faith. Because we live by faith. And as we saw in Psalm 106, they believed his words, they sang his praise.

One mark of faith is, we thank him. At kindergarten, we thank him for forgiving our sins. Or we thank him for giving us his Holy Spirit.

But then as we progress in faith, we come to the place where we thank him when we believe that God's going to take care of that problem, which I don't see the solution yet. The enemies are still there, but God set a table before me. He hasn't set me up with guns to fight my enemies.

He set a table before me. He said, forget about the enemies, I'll take care of them. And I sit down with God and thank him.

So, let's use that as a sort of a gauge to find out whether we are really progressing or stagnating in our Christian life. I get the feeling that so many Christians are stagnating. Because they're not judging themselves by scriptural standards.

Very often, they're judging themselves by comparing themselves with other believers who are at a much lower level. They're happy that they're better than them. I never in my life want to be happy comparing myself with somebody else.

If I do compare myself with someone, it's with Jesus Christ. The Bible says we have to look unto Jesus and run this race, which means my life, I'm constantly comparing myself with Christ. And I'll tell you this, after being a Christian for 57 years, I discover I'm painfully short of many things in Christ-likeness.

I get light. It's not the same areas. But you know, it's like a student studying mathematics.

And in kindergarten, they may learn two plus two, and then they go on to subtraction and multiplication and division. But mathematics has got a lot more than just addition and subtraction. You go on to algebra and geometry and calculus and so many things.

So there is a, there is a something wonderful in the Christian life, which I'll never attain to unless I'm willing to make progress and judge myself continuously. Lord, I want to go on or to use the picture of the Israelites entering the promised land. When they entered the, you know, they crossed the river Jordan after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and entered in.

And when they entered in, they could say, at last we got into the promised land. And there is a time when we can say, now I have begun to take my Christian life seriously. It's not just God has forgiven my sins, and I'm baptized, and I'm on my way to heaven.

I'm gone beyond all that. I'm coming to a serious life of overcoming sin. And I've taken that seriously, and I've entered into this life.

But after they entered Canaan, they had all these giants to conquer. We can think of Canaan as little pockets controlled by different giants, the whole land. And they had to conquer it little by little by little.

You read the book of Joshua, how they would kill some giants and occupy his territory. And they kill another giant and occupy his. Every giant they killed, the territory became theirs.

So the life of victory is like that. It's not just suddenly you got it, and it's all over. It's not all over.

You entered the land of victory, good. Now you've got a thousand giants to kill the rest of your life. And, you know, the Bible speaks about entering into rest in Hebrews, chapter 3 and chapter 4. That's the land of Canaan.

It's called the land of rest. But the rest doesn't come until you kill that giant. In one particular area, if I kill the giant, his property becomes mine.

I've come into rest. But only in that area. Then I move into another area and kill another giant and enter into rest in that area.

See, there are some areas of our life which are very, very difficult to conquer, like anger, sexually dirty ways of thinking, and for some people, pornography. They're difficult to conquer. I get so many emails from people who tell me honestly about their struggles, because emails are anonymous.

You don't know from which part of the world they're writing. They're very honest in what they say. They're struggling.

The number of born-again believers, young men who are struggling with pornography is amazing. I'd say 70 to 80 percent of born-again believers are struggling with pornography. And they look so holy when they sit in the church.

They don't know what to do. It is not God's will that you should be a slave to any of these things. Some of these things are difficult to conquer.

Sexually dirty habits and anger. But there are some other things which are easier to conquer. So if you don't deal with the easy giants, you're not going to be able to conquer the difficult ones.

And one of the easy giants that you should be able to conquer, I call it a kindergarten giant, is getting offended. That's not so difficult to conquer. It's not like anger and sexually dirty ways of thinking.

Getting offended is only because I'm proud. Why should that guy treat me like that? Or why should that guy not do this which he promised to do? No, I don't want to die. I'm not bothered.

So I want to encourage you to conquer this kindergarten giant. If you're really serious about conquering the tough ones like anger and sexually dirty habits, begin with the kindergarten giants like saying, Lord, I'm going to finish with this. I'm going to really finish with getting offended.

By the grace of God, I'll never get offended no matter what somebody does or does not do what he promised to do or says to me or does not say to me which I expect him to say to me. Maybe I expect him to come and say thank you and he didn't say thank you. Forget it.

It's okay. The world is full of ungrateful people. So why should that affect me? I'm determined to get over this matter of getting offended.

And begin at home that you'll never get offended with what your wife did or didn't do or the breakfast was not ready on time and you had to go to work. Give thanks. Say, Lord, maybe you want me to fast today.

You see, I love food too much. Thank you. The food is not breakfast is not ready today.

Praise the Lord. Find something good to thank God for and finish with this habit of grumbling and complaining. I'll tell you, you will see a tremendous difference in your life.

Start with the kindergarten lessons. Don't try to jump to calculus when you haven't learned addition and subtraction that can wait. So another giant kindergarten giant is expecting respect from others.

You know how much a lot of people want that? I find in India, particularly parents and grandparents, you always expect respect. To me, it's a lot of garbage. Absolutely garbage.

Why should I expect respect from anybody? I say on one hand, I'm a rotten sinner saved by grace, and then I expect people to respect me. It's a contradiction. I don't deserve anything but hell.

That's one of the things many years ago, that the only thing I deserve was hell, because I was a sinner. Okay, anything better than that, I got to be thankful for. And everything I have on earth is better than that.

Much better. And I don't want to add to that, that somebody must respect me. Oh, well, I'm 76 years old, people should respect me.

Rubbish. It's rubbish. Absolute rubbish.

It's a giant you got to finish with. You don't expect people to give you thanks or respect you or anything. I tell you, your life will be so much more peaceful.

I'm telling you from my own experience. You won't be disturbed. You won't be disturbed with what people do or say or think.

And you know what will happen if you progress like this. As you get older and older and older and older, you'll be such a sweet, gracious person that people will love to be with you. I remember listening to a message by a man called A.W. Tozer.

A.W. Tozer was a great man of God who lived in the United States and died in 1962 or something more than 50 years ago. He was like a modern day prophet. And he says how when he was a young Christian, he belonged to a church called the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church.

And that was started by a very godly man in the 19th century called A.B. Simpson, a fantastically godly man. He's the one who wrote *Once It Was a Blessing, Now It Is the Lord* and songs like that. So A.B. Simpson preached salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and holy life and all that.

And the Christian Missionary Alliance started out as a wonderful church. But like every church over a period of time, decline sets in, even among the leaders. A.W. Tozer came years later.

It's all generation after the founder. And when he grew up as a young pastor, he was so disappointed with the doctrine that was being preached in the church, which was such a high standard, and the quality of life of not the ordinary people, but of the leaders and the pastors and the senior older pastors. So as a young pastor, he went to a really godly man, one whom he respected in that church.

And he asked him a question. He said, why is it with this truth that we preach, which is the most wonderful truth that we have among compared to all the other churches that are preaching, and this truth should produce some of the sweetest and the most godly saints? Why is it some of the leaders in our church are so grumpy and sour and hard to get along with? And he says that wise old man just kept quiet. He didn't know what to say.

But that's a question I have also asked. Why is it people who have heard some of the most wonderful truths for so many years are so grumpy and sour and bitter and complaining and backbiting and criticizing? And they should be some of the sweetest saints on the face of the earth. I'll tell you why.

Because they have not spent their life judging themselves. The Bible speaks about walking in the light. We can have fellowship with God if we walk in the light, not stand still in the light.

There's no such thing as standing still in the light. They always compare it to an airplane. An airplane is either moving forward.

If it switches off its engine, it goes down. It can't stay up there. There's no such thing as an airplane standing still in the sky like that.

So we either are moving forward or we're going down. And if I'm not moving forward, I'm going down. And this is a condition of many, many people I've met as they've grown older.

People have been believers for 30, 40 years. You look at their lives, there's so much of a spirit, which is sour. It's not sweet.

You want to avoid them because they've got something to complain about every time you meet them. Something's wrong with somebody or the other. And I say, I don't want to be with such people.

And I want to say to you, you're not 60 or 70, but I'll tell you one day you will be if the Lord tarries. And what you're going to be when you're 60 or 70 is determined by how you're going to live today. You can't suddenly become spiritual.

No, it's a slow progress. A person who's determined, I like a five-year-old who goes to school and you ask him, what do you want to do? He says, I want to get a PhD. Wow, that's great.

Stick to it, my son. Don't give up that. He's only five years old.

Think of a Christian who says, I want to be Christ-like and every year I'm going to make progress. And don't worry about the others around you. Don't complain about them.

Don't be disturbed that other people in the church are not making progress. It makes no difference. You'll never find a church where everyone in the church is serious about following the Lord.

I'll tell you that after seeing hundreds and hundreds of churches, you'll never find a church where everybody's interested in following the Lord. Almost all the churches I've been to, more than 50% are carnal, the people. I've never found a church where more than 50% are spiritual.

I hope your church will be. With greater potential and greater opportunity and the greater truth that we hear, if everybody's judging themselves, Lord, there's a little more area where I have to become Christ-like and I want to get light on it. See, there are two cleansings.

One is where God cleanses us and the other is where we cleanse ourselves. Let me show you that. 1 John 1 is where we read about God cleansing us.

That's mostly relating to our past. I can never cleanse from my life the guilt of my past. I've done a million things wrong in my past and I can never do one thing to cleanse it away.

Nothing. In the coming days also, I'm probably going to do a few of the wrong things still, not as much as in the past days, and I can never do anything to cleanse it away. Only God can do it.

1 John 1.7 says, if we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us. That's what God cleanses me from the guilt of my past life. As I said, I can never do a single thing to... I can repent and say, I won't do it again.

That's fine. But I cannot remove the blot on my past life with anything. Somebody else has to pay the price for that, and Jesus paid it on the cross.

And because He paid it on the cross, thank God my past can be blotted out. Whether I committed one sin only in my life or a billion sins, it's the same. The blood of Jesus, which He shed on the cross, His death atones for my sin before a just God who cannot overlook my sin just because He loves me, because He would undermine the foundations of justice in this universe if He just forgave me because I was sorry for.

Sin is serious. I often tell non-Christians when I'm witnessing to them, sin is not like breaking a cup or a saucer at home. You go to your mom and say, I'm sorry, Mom, I broke this saucer.

Mom says, forget it. It's okay. If sin were like that, you go to God and say, I'm sorry for what I did.

God says, okay, forget it. It's not serious. It's 100 murders.

You committed 100 murders, and your father is the judge in the court. What's he going to do? Oh, 100 murders, son. It's okay.

Forget it. No. Sin is very serious.

And that's why nothing can atone for it. I can never do anything to atone even for one sin. God had to do it all.

And that's why it's so important to understand the love of God in sending Jesus to die for me. So the blood of Jesus, his death on the cross, cleanses all my past life, thank God. But now, the Bible speaks about this nature I have where I have to cleanse myself.

That's a repeated many times scripture in 1 John chapter 3. It says, if you have the hope of Christ coming again, verse 2, and you're becoming like him, when he appears, verse 2, we'll become like him, 1 John 3.2. And if you have this hope of becoming like him, you will purify yourself until you reach his standard of purity. Keep that as your goal. It's like that five-year-old wanting a PhD.

Until I reach the goal, I'm going to purify myself. That's what I mean by judging yourself and cleansing yourself until you reach the goal. And the Bible speaks about cleansing ourselves also in 2 Corinthians in chapter 7. The reason I show you these scriptures is so that you remember them.

And you see it in your Bible and you know it's not just some theory I'm preaching, but it's what the Holy Spirit has written in his word. 2 Corinthians 7.1. Since we have these wonderful promises, promises are in the previous verses that God will be a father to me. Let us cleanse ourselves.

We saw about God cleansing us. That's one part of cleansing. This is me cleansing myself.

From what? Not from the guilt of my past sin. That I can never do. I told you that.

But I can cleanse myself from present filthiness in my flesh and in my spirit. Flesh and spirit means, to make it more simple, external sin and internal sin. I can cleanse myself from these bad habits that are external and the filthy things that are internal that nobody sees.

Sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. I can cleanse myself. And one of those sins of the flesh is this grumbling and complaining and murmuring.

Why does a child of God do it? An unbeliever doing it, I can understand. But why does a child of God do it? If a child of God believes that God is making everything work together for my good, if I really believe it, like it says in Romans 8.28, how can I grumble and complain? Like, you know, something that happens right now, like the illustration I used earlier about my wife. If you could see what the end result is going to be, you would give thanks.

It's when you don't see the end result and you see only this present thing, it looks terrible what has happened to me. Unrighteous, etc., etc. Then I complain.

But if I could see the end, I'd say, oh, praise the Lord. God brought something good out of it. I've often asked people this question.

What is the worst thing that ever happened on this earth? The worst sin that anybody ever committed? It's the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. There was never a sin committed on this earth worse than the killing of the

Son of God. Okay, we got that right.

Now, the next question is, what is the best thing that ever happened on this earth? The crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Wasn't that the best thing that ever happened? I mean, where would we be if that didn't happen? So, see, the worst thing that happened is also the best thing that happened. God turned the worst that the devil and men could do into the very best for us.

So, there are many lessons we can learn from the Cross of Calvary. Most Christians have only learned one thing, my sins are forgiven. I tell you, that's just the ABC.

If you meditate on the Cross of Calvary, there are many, many more things there. The devil was defeated. And here's another really good thing.

The worst thing that man could do got converted into the best possible thing. That's what I learned from the Cross. And that means everything else that happens now is not as bad as the crucifixion of Christ.

Think of the worst thing that somebody did to you. Can you think of that? The worst thing that somebody in the world did to you at some time. It's not as bad as the crucifixion of Christ.

I remember once one brother complained to me, sitting complaining, oh brother, these people are treating me like this and treating me like this. I said, have they crucified you yet? No. Oh, well, you've got a long way to go.

I said, forget about all that. There's nothing that people have done to us as bad as the crucifixion of Christ. And if that, the worst ever, could be converted into the best ever, have faith that the same God, who is your Father, will convert that which looks so bad right now into something wonderful.

That's why we give thanks. It's not a blind gritting your teeth and saying, I'm going to give thanks. It's a meaningful giving thanks because this is the best for me, even though it doesn't look like it right now.

That is giving thanks in faith, from faith to faith. Progression is always in faith. So, let me conclude with Revelation chapter 5, which I mentioned briefly at the beginning.

When we get to heaven, we'll see this happening there. I mean, John saw it already. I believe it's happening all the time.

Revelation 5, it says in verse 9, they sang a new song. A new means something they never heard before. Like if you learn a new song here, it's a song you never heard before.

A new song. They sang a new song in heaven. And what is that new song? Thou art worthy to break the seals because you were slain and you purchased us for God with thy blood from every tribe and tongue and nation.

Lord Jesus, you died on the cross and you saved us from our sin. You say, that's not a new song. I've heard it for 50 years.

How is it a new song? And how can it be perpetually a new song? I sought God for revelation on this. And I saw this, that there's something that happens when we go to heaven. We can begin it even now, where every time I hear that Jesus died for my sins, it's going to be as if I heard it for the first time.

Is that how it's going to be a new song? That means they sing it 100 years later, and it's as if they've heard it for the first time. You mean Jesus died for me? Wow. And I said, Lord, can you begin that life in me or now itself, that I get a taste of it? I can't have it in its fullness as I have in heaven, but can you give me a foretaste? You know, I believe that God gives us little foretastes of heaven in many areas.

When we think of healing, healing is actually a foretaste of the wonderful new body we'll have when we get to heaven. That's why I believe in praying for healing. And if he doesn't give it, okay, that's his wisdom.

But sometimes he does. And here's what I prayed for. I said, Lord, I've known for years that Jesus died for me.

Even before I was really born again, I knew Jesus died for my sins. But I want you to do such a work in my heart that whenever I sing that you died for me, it really does something in my heart. Like, even when he sang this morning, I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder, wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean.

I've sung that song for 45 years, but it grips me even today. When I sang that line, I said, Lord, I wonder how you could love a sinner condemned, unclean. I'm beginning to taste an answer to prayer.

Lord, help me to sing that new song now that Jesus died for me. Because I'll tell you this, I've seen a lot of Christians who've lost the wonder of it. It's an old tale.

I know. And you see that in the result in their lives. They're so casual about sin.

See, one of the results of this seeing, trying to see the cross as it were the first time, every time, is that I begin to take sin seriously. Because I say, Lord, this is what crucified you. It's this habit of mine that killed you, that nailed you to the cross.

I want to hate it. I'll tell you something. If you walk this way of judging yourself, judging yourself, as you grow older, you will not be one of those grumpy, sour, hard to get along old people that people don't want to be anywhere near.

You'll be such a sweet saint when you're 90 years old. And I hope all of you will live to that ripe old age, if Jesus doesn't come earlier, where you'll be such a blessing with no demands on anybody, no complaints against anyone, no expectations that you got to treat me like this or treat me like zero. Because you're so taken up with Jesus.

And you're so taken up with the wonder that he loved a sinner condemned and unclean like me, that your life will be just constantly thanksgiving, thanksgiving, thanksgiving, even some things you can't understand. Lord, I know. I know from the cross, the worst was turned into the best.

So this is not as bad as the cross. And you're going to turn into something wonderful, which I don't understand now. So I'm not going to be sour and grumpy.

I'm going to be thankful. This is how God wants every single child of his to be. This is one of the marks of spiritual growth.

God bless you all.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/xxPKEqGMR6Q.mp4>

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