

The Beginning Of All Sin Is Pride

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of hitting the root cause of sin, which is pride, and the necessity of genuine humility in our lives. It highlights the journey from failure to victory, where true victory is marked by humility and not falling into pride. The speaker stresses the need to consider others as more important than ourselves, following the example of Jesus' humility and selflessness.

Scripture: Ezekiel 28:17, Philippians 2:3, Matthew 3:10, John 13:4, 1 Peter 5:5, James 4:6, Proverbs 16:18, Luke 14:11, Romans 12:3

Topics: "Pride vs. Humility", "The Journey from Failure to Victory"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of hitting the root cause of sin, which is pride, and the necessity of genuine humility in our lives. It highlights the journey from failure to victory, where true victory is marked by humility and not falling into pride. The speaker stresses the need to consider others as more important than ourselves, following the example of Jesus' humility and selflessness.

Transcript

I told you earlier that God allows us to fail and fail and fail and fail and fail and come to rock bottom. And when you come there, you learn two lessons. One of those I already mentioned that I can never get victory.

No matter how hard I try, it's like those disciples who went fishing. I can fish left side, right side, front side, back side, I won't get fish. I try, try, try, try for six hours and I say, okay, enough, I can't get any fish.

I'm going home. Then the Lord comes, cast your net on the right side and suddenly the whole boat is full of fish. That's how we get victory.

When you come to rock bottom and you say it's hopeless, there's no hope for me, I'm the worst case of all, the Lord says, now you're ready for victory. Because when you get the victory, you won't come to the shore with this bag full of fish and saying, see what I caught. You'll come with your head bowed and say, I could catch nothing, but the Lord gave me victory.

You will say that till the end of your life. I've seen people who get victory and they get proud of it and they fall again. Why do they fall again? Have you had that experience, where you get victory for a little while and then you fall again? I'll tell you why.

There's only one reason to fall. When you got victory, you became proud of it. God has to save us from pride.

It's no use God saving us from a ten foot pit called anger or lust and you fall into a thousand foot pit called pride. That's not victory. That's defeat.

That's what's happened to so many people. You can get up and preach a good sermon one day and so many people are blessed and you get so puffed up that for the next one year your sermons are all boring because God took away the anointing. It's very easy for God to bless a man, it's very difficult for God to keep him humble after he has blessed him.

It happened to me. I remember in the early days, sometimes I'd experience an anointing and then I'd get puffed up and the next time I got up it was dry as a bone. And I knew why.

I didn't even have to ask God. God does not give his grace to the proud. The greatest work God can accomplish in you is he can keep you humble after he has blessed you and anointed you immensely.

Given you victory, given you a ministry, keeps you down in the dust before his face, God's done a work. But he cannot do that until you have failed and failed and failed and failed and failed and failed and you say, Lord it's impossible, I cannot catch fish. Then he'll fill your boat.

The second lesson that we learn when we have failed so much is this, that we never despise another human being after that. I can honestly say that today before God. Now, I do not feel that I'm better than any other human being because I know how much I've failed.

I know God's done a tremendous work in my life. Imagine a man like me who was discouraged most of the time and now rejoicing every day of the year. What a work that itself is.

Man who has defeated my thoughts, God's given me purity. God's able to control my tongue, a man who used to get angry and upset and all that. It's God.

It's 100% God. I can't take any credit for it. But when I look at another person who falls into sin, I can say before God I don't despise him.

Do you husbands despise your wives? I'll tell you why. You have not hit rock bottom yet. You've got miles to go before you come to a genuine life of victory.

You know that you have come to victory when you despise nobody. You know that you are victorious that when you don't despise your wife, when you don't despise your husband, when you don't despise that other brother who has fallen so much, you don't agree with him, but you don't despise him. You can look at everybody and say, I don't despise him, I don't despise him, I don't I was worse than that and God did a work in me, so I have faith that God can do a work in that person too.

That's the mark of a man who has hit rock bottom. I really believe my brothers and sisters, until you hit rock bottom, whatever victory you have will only be temporary, shallow, superficial, only to impress others. It will not be genuine.

Don't be satisfied that other people in your church think you are victorious. That is worthless. It's like painted gold, wood painted to look like gold, what's the use of that? It says in the days of Rehoboam, you read that in the Old Testament, when the enemy came and took away the gold shields, he put some

bronze shields that looked like gold to fool the people that it's still here.

It wasn't there, the enemy had taken it away. Very often we do that. When the enemy has taken away our joy and our victory, we still try to pretend that it's there.

It's not there. You know a lot of people who are song leaders in a lot of charismatic churches, they are great people at smiling and laughing and cracking jokes and all, it's only for those few hours in the pulpit, go and see how they live on Monday and Tuesday in their home. There's no joy.

It's froth. A lot of these meetings where they whip people up to be emotional and excited, it's like putting soap into water and stirring it up, there's a lot of bubbles. Go back a half an hour later, there's nothing there.

I don't want a joy like that, that comes like soap bubbles and disappears after a while. That's not godliness. There's a lot of this superficiality among Christians.

Don't be satisfied with it. God has to allow you to become weak, weak until you come to zero, and the proof of it will be you'll never be proud after preaching an anointed sermon, you will never be proud if somebody got healed when you laid hands on that person, you will not be proud when you got victory, and you will not despise any other human being. You won't look down on the Roman Catholics, you will not look down on the CSI or people in other denominations.

You'll disagree with them, you may not work with them, but you will not look down on anyone. Because you'll say, I'm the chiefest of sinners and God did a work in me, why can't he do it in other people? That's the mark of a man who's got genuine victory, and God wants to bring every one of us there. That's why he allows failure, that's why he makes us weak, that's why he allows so many circumstances in your life that appear to be frustrating you, you blame people, don't blame people, it was God trying to break you and humble you, and then he'll give you wisdom.

He'll give you words of wisdom, he'll give you a solution to the problems that you find in your life, but it's in that low place. You've got to lie there with your mouth in the dust. John the Apostle, when he was 95 years old and he saw Jesus, he immediately put his face in the dust.

Imagine having walked with God for 65 years of spiritual life and his face in the dust. And I see brothers who haven't even walked with God for 2-3 years, their faces all lifted up. They haven't learned what John learned.

It's in the dust, when your face is in the dust, that the Lord says, John, I'm going to give you a message to these seven churches. And he gave him. When your face is in the dust, he'll give you a message to many churches, but you lift up your head and you won't hear him.

But if your face is in the dust, you'll hear his voice like a trumpet. God makes us weak with a purpose. This is the new covenant.

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus and for Jesus' ministry. And one of the things he said in Matthew 3 and verse 10 was, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. See, all sin has got a root cause to it.

In the old covenant of the Old Testament, the root was never hit by the old covenant message. The law could only deal with the external. Don't murder.

Jesus said, go to the root of it, anger, hit that. The old covenant was don't commit adultery. And Jesus said, go to the root of it, it's in your thoughts, lusting after women.

Everywhere he was going to the root, that's what he said here, the root, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. The sad thing I have found in many Christians, even born again Christians, is they are dealing with the fruit. That's old covenant.

There were many old covenant people who lived an externally good life. I mean, think of John the Baptist. Think of Elijah.

They were not living externally bad lives. I think their life was probably better than the lives of many of us. So what does the new covenant bring? The axe is laid to the root of the tree.

And in the Old Testament, nobody understood where the root of the tree was. We can say the law was like a pair of scissors. You know, bad fruit is coming there, you cut it off.

Another bad fruit coming here, you cut it off. And if you have a tree that's always producing bad fruit, you'll have to keep on going around with your scissors all the time. You have to preserve your testimony.

You have to always cut off here and cut off there so that your testimony is not spoiled. That's not new covenant Christianity. But if you hit the root of that tree, you won't need the scissors anymore.

The root is hit and the bad fruit does not come. So that's what John the Baptist said. Now Jesus is coming, the axe is laid to the root of the trees.

So all the sins that you face, you know, we are tempted by so many things in our life. There's a big list of sins in some epistles in the New Testament. It gives a list of number of sins.

Jesus spoke about a number of sins that come out of the heart of man. But what is the root? The root is found when we look at the origin of sin. Where did sin originate? Sin did not originate with adultery or anger, the things we are battling with, or with the love of money.

None of these things, the things we battle with is not the origin of sin. And you can try to cut off the love of money and cut off that anger and cut off watching pornography, but you haven't hit the root. The root is described in Ezekiel 28.

In Ezekiel chapter 28, the word of the Lord, it says here, came to Ezekiel saying, say this to the leader of Tyre. That was a human leader, an earthly king of the city of Tyre. But behind that earthly king, earthly leader, was the real king of Tyre, and that was the devil himself.

And then, so the Lord says in verse 11, now take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre. That's the one who's behind the leader. And you know that now he's talking to the devil because he tells him, this is not any human being, Ezekiel 28, 12, you have the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

This is what Lucifer, or whatever his name was, we don't know his name, he's called star of the morning, and it's commonly referred to as Lucifer, but that's not in the Bible. Every precious stone was your covering, and it goes on to say, on the day you were created in verse 14, here's what he's described as,

the anointed cherub, he's an angel. The anointed cherub who guards Eden, verse 13, you were in Eden.

Before Adam and Eve went to Eden, there was somebody else in Eden. That was the star of the morning, who we know today as the devil. He was the anointed cherub, or angel, who guarded Eden.

And that's what made him jealous when one day he saw God putting somebody else there to guard that garden of Eden. That's what...he was determined to get that fellow out of Eden, where he was supposed to be. You know, it's like when you're appointed in some important position in an office, and then you're removed from there, and somebody else is put there, who is junior to you, and you want to somehow get him out of there, because you're jealous.

And that's why he was against Adam and Eve over there. And the Lord says, I placed you in Eden, verse 14. You were on the holy mountain of God until the day, verse 15, unrighteousness was found in you.

Here's where the root of sin comes in. It was perfect until that day. And it says here, in verse 17, what the root was.

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, because of your wisdom. So there you have the root of sin. It's not external.

Sin is not in anything external. It's in the heart. And it comes from the heart becoming proud because of something God has given us.

God had given him wisdom. God says, you corrupted your wisdom, it says in verse 17. Beauty, see the two things mentioned in verse 17.

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, and your wisdom, and your splendor. Our heart can be lifted up because of some wisdom God has given us, or some glory, or something that makes us stand up above other people. Maybe victory over sin.

Something that maybe you can preach better than others. Maybe you're smarter than others, or you can do something far better, and your heart is lifted up. It's nothing on the outside.

You can still act very humble with, you know, speak the right humble words and fool people, but God's not fooled, and the devil's not fooled. That root in the heart, if it's not hit, you remain defeated all your life. It will spring out here in one way, and spring out there another way, and God wants to hit that root.

Jesus came to hit that root. That root is your heart getting lifted up, maybe because of spiritual reasons. Like we heard just now, you could preach a powerful sermon, and then for the rest of the time, you're thinking, what a wonderful message I preached, or something like that.

The heart is lifted up, or you look down at others, and you're always feeling, you know, this feeling that when you have a conflict with somebody, that guy's wrong. He's definitely wrong. I'm right, of course.

I'm never wrong. I'm always right. That person's wrong.

That is where the root of sin is. It's pride that makes you feel you're always right, and the other person is wrong, and you don't consider the possibility that you could be wrong, at least sometimes. The devil does not allow us to think like that.

I want to say, brothers and sisters, that that will hinder your spiritual growth, and I believe that many of us could have gone far ahead spiritually in humility and in conformity to the likeness of Christ if we had allowed the Holy Spirit to hit the root down below in our heart, the root of exalting ourselves, and as soon as it comes up—see, we are tempted to pride. Pride is the primary characteristic of Satan, and all the sin in the world originated here in what you read in this chapter, and God tossed him down, not because he committed adultery, not because he stole money or he loved money, or not because he did anything other than he was—and even his pride was not visible. It says your heart was lifted up means it was invisible, so there are a lot of lessons we can learn from this.

What is the root to which the axe has to be laid? If I identify that, and you allow the Lord—say, Lord, hit that root in my heart. I took a long time after being born again—I'd say more than 15, 16 years as a born-again Christian before I discovered where the root of sin was, because I never heard anybody preach about it. People were preaching about external sins—don't do this, and don't do the other thing, and I had my scissors ready to cut off anything that I heard was bad.

That's a bad testimony for a Christian. This is a bad testimony for a Christian. I had my scissors ready to cut it all off, and this is how most Christians are living, and yet the root is never hit, and Jesus came to hit the root.

All the conflict in families, all the discord that comes between husband and wife, all the divorces in the world, and all the conflict between believers is always because of this root not being hit, sometimes in both people or sometimes in one of them. And even if the other person—if you have a conflict with somebody in your home, with your children or with your wife or husband, instead of concentrating on where the fault is in the other person, ask yourself one question. Is there a root something in my heart that the Lord wants to lay an axe to? Open yourself up to that possibility and say, Lord, lay the axe to the root.

I want to eliminate that which made the highest archangel into a devil in a moment. It didn't take him 10 years to be the devil. One moment he was the anointed archangel, the highest of all the angels.

The next moment he was the devil. It doesn't take long for an archangel to become a devil. Why can't that happen today? For a godly man suddenly to become so evil, and what is the cause? He didn't commit adultery.

He didn't steal anybody's money. He just got puffed up with what? Verse 17, his spiritual attractiveness, at least that he thought he was attractive, that everybody thought he was a wonderful saint because he had built up such a reputation in the church, and his inner idea of his own wisdom, how he feels he knows more than anybody else. That can happen to any of us, and it's a wonderful thing if God can give us light on this.

That's why you often heard me say the three secrets of the Christian life are humility, humility, humility, and where do I get that from? I get it from Philippians 2. If pride was the root of all sin, it has to be the opposite of that that is the root of all salvation, definitely, and that's why salvation came through the humility of Christ, just like sin came through the pride of the archangel. Pride is that which elevates a person. Humility is that which brings a person down.

The archangel exalted himself. I mean, he got so crazy he thought he could go above God himself. That's how stupid pride can be.

Now you see how salvation came. You see how sin came, and the opposite of Ezekiel 28 is in Philippians 2. Philippians 2, it says in verse 3, do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. Empty conceit is the root of sin in the heart.

A conceit in the heart that makes me think I'm better than everybody else, but with humility of mind, look at this exhortation. I don't know how many of you really have taken this seriously. With humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourself.

Take that one statement and meditate on it for this week. Regard others as more important than yourself. Now, don't misunderstand it.

Not more spiritual than yourself. That's impossible. If somebody is not more spiritual, how can you fool yourself and believe he is? But it says here, regard others as more important.

And then it says, have the same attitude, verse 5, that Jesus had. Jesus did not go around thinking everybody is more spiritual than me. That's a foolish idea that some people say.

Yeah, consider the other person as more spiritual than you. Rubbish. That's not what Jesus did.

Paul did not consider all the Corinthians as more spiritual than himself. He said, you're all carnal. So this is a false humility where you go around pretending that you think other people are more spiritual than you, and when you know they're not.

I don't believe others are more spiritual than me if they're not. But I... Because Jesus never did that. We don't follow Jesus there.

But Jesus did consider everybody as more important than himself. That's why when the bucket of water was there at the Last Supper, which a slave was supposed to take and wash people's feet, and none of the disciples did it, Jesus said, well, I'm the least important person here. I'll do it.

There's a difference between knowing you're the least important and pretending to be the least spiritual. No. Or pretending to be humble.

Pretending that others are more spiritual. That's all garbage. Consider others as more important than yourself.

Treat others... If you believe that someone is more important than yourself, you will always treat them with respect. For example, how would you treat a dignitary, a state dignitary like the governor if he came to your house? That's the way I examine myself. I mean, I've been down to the poorest villages in India, extremely uneducated people who are very, very simple and very poor.

And the Lord told me, treat these people as dignitaries. Respect them. Consider them as more important than yourself.

And that's what I've striven to do in all the 50 years that I've gone to those places. Consider others more important. That is the attitude of Jesus Christ.

I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, as you sit in this church, if you follow that exhortation, consider others not as more spiritual. You know they're not. You know some people sitting here are very carnal.

But more important than yourself. Respect them as more important, like a dignitary. Don't treat them lightly.

Recognize yourself as least important, even if you're the most spiritual. I believe the most spiritual person here will definitely think of himself as the least important. The two go together.

And here is the three steps of humility I mentioned. Now, this is the opposite of the highest archangel. If sin had to come through an archangel trying to exalt himself, salvation had to come by the opposite of that, by somebody humbling himself.

So we see Jesus, you see the three steps of humility there, because it says here in verse five, have the same attitude in yourself which is in Jesus Christ. And what is that? Number one, though he was God, verse six, he did not hang on to that. But emptied himself of all that sense of importance and being what he was.

You know, there's a lot of it in us. We may think we are very humble, but we've got a lot of thing in our head which makes us feel we are pretty important. And it's only an act of humility very often in our language.

But it says he humbled himself and came right down to become a man. First step of humility. Second, as a man, he could have walked around as a king, but no.

He took the place of a slave, a bond servant, it says, verse seven, which is a slave. God becoming man itself is a big thing. But then as a man, he became a slave, the lowest level of the human race, slaves, which is lower than even servants.

And you'd think he'd reach the bottom. No. He went one step further.

He went down to being thought of as a criminal. Those are the three steps of humility. God becoming man, man becoming like a bond slave, and a bond slave going even down and being considered as a criminal on the cross.

And it says here, that's why I say three steps of humility, humility, humility. That's the secret to the Christian life. And it says here, you must have the same attitude.

And this is not something that, you know, we want other people to recognize. It's not that you go around getting a reputation now for being very humble, for humility. That's a lot of garbage.

But you recognize in yourself what you are and seek to follow Jesus inwardly. That's the only way I want to say to you, dear brothers and sisters, that the devil will have no power over you. The devil has power over anybody who's got even an atom of pride in him.

If there's conflict in your home, it's because the devil has brought pride in somebody there. And you cannot overcome pride with more pride. You cannot overcome somebody's arguing by arguing against that person, husband or wife.

The only way you can overcome is the way Jesus overcame, humility. Go down, go down, go down right to the bottom. Keep quiet.

Let the other person think they won the argument. Go down. Didn't the devil think he had won on the cross of Calvary? Jesus is willing to let everybody think that the devil finally won.

The Pharisees finally won. Let them think that. And have you noticed that he did not even want to prove after his resurrection? You know how a human being would have such a temptation after the resurrection to go and stand before Pilate and say, hey, you thought you could get rid of me.

Here I am. Or to go before the Pharisees and say, you thought you could get rid of me. Here I am.

Do you know that Jesus never showed himself to a single unbeliever after he was resurrected? He never wanted that carnal, evil delight in humiliating other people by saying, hey, I triumphed. You tried to crush me. I could not be crushed.

Do you have that desire? When somebody tried to harm you, to somehow prove to that person that you triumphed? It's not the spirit of Christ. He did not want to show himself to anybody after the resurrection. He showed himself only to believers who already trusted in him.

That's a tremendous example for me. There should be no cheap triumphalism. A triumphalism that is cheap to show other people, I triumphed over you.

There must never be even an atom of that spirit in us. No desire to show, see, you tried to harm me, but see what I did. I overcame you.

What a lust there is in us to show, and we think we are glorifying God that way. Jesus could have thought that I can glorify God by standing before Pilate or standing before the Pharisees and say, see, I'm resurrected. See how God honored me.

Has God honored you? Keep quiet about it. Bury it. Let the Lord show it in the day he returns.

Not today. This is not the time to reveal those things. When Christ returns, he will be exalted.

We don't want to be exalted before that. We must have no desire to prove ourselves right to anybody in the world. Let the whole world think we are wrong.

Even today, the whole world thinks that, I mean, when Jesus died, he never showed himself to anybody, and even today, people say that he never rose from the dead. It's a wonderful thing to see this, the way that Jesus went, and if we allow this to happen in our lives, and the axe is laid to the root of the tree, I believe our victory will be genuine. We'll come to a real overcoming life where there'll be no strife or conflict in our heart or no attitude in our heart that is negative towards any other human being.

We've got to work towards that. Work on it, brothers and sisters. God will help us.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/417cfecadBY.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-beginning-of-all-sin-is-pride/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net