

# The Proof of Genuine Humility

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of delving deep into Scripture and meditating on God's Word to truly understand and apply its teachings. It highlights the need to seek humility and grace, learning from Jesus as the ultimate example. The speaker warns against self-deception in spiritual growth, urging continual progress in humility and grace through practical tests. The ultimate goal is to find rest for the soul by following Jesus' example of gentleness and humility.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:44, Psalm 1:2, Matthew 11:29, Zephaniah 2:3, 1 Peter 5:5, Romans 6:14, Galatians 6:3, Philipians 2:12, Hebrews 4:1

**Topics:** "Meditation on Scripture", "Humility and Grace"

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## Description

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## Transcript

When we read a command like we just heard, in our memory verse, love your enemies and bless those who curse you and pray for those who spitefully use you, we must not go at it superficially. It is just not on the surface. Go on to the next verse.

I found sometimes that the Lord keeps me stuck on a verse for a few days because I haven't got to the depth of it. I believe that we miss a lot if we don't meditate. Blessed is the man who meditates on the law of the Lord day and night.

He will be like a tree planted by the waters, always bringing forth fruit. And meditation can't be done so suddenly. So when we think of that, we have to go try to understand it.

Lord, I want to understand it. That's been my habit for many years. If I don't understand a verse, it's like when I read something in English and I don't understand it.

Like today I kept on hearing Jeremy saying Groundhog Day, Groundhog Day. I'm not as clever as he is. What does that mean? Those who grew up in the United States probably know it.

It means something that keeps on repeating itself every day, the same old routine without any change. If I'm right, that's the meaning. And that's what many of us have been experiencing in this COVID-19 lockdown periods.

So if you have this habit of when you don't understand a word, go look up a dictionary. When you don't understand in scripture, Lord, I want to find the meaning of that. How am I supposed to love my enemies? Don't go too far.

For example, of course, Jesus is our example. That's the answer in everything. The secret of godliness is the way to live a godly life is not an easy matter, as I said last time.

But the answer lies in Christ. So I see Christ as the living word. And the Bible is the written word.

So to understand the written word, I go to the dictionary, which is the living word, which is Jesus Christ. So I don't go too far. What does it mean to love my enemies? I must forgive them completely.

But I don't have to fellowship with them. Sometimes people say forgiveness means I must go and fellowship with that person. No.

Jesus is my example. He forgave all those Pharisees who were determined to kill him, but he had fellowship with none of them. He's my example.

I don't want to be more spiritual than Jesus. There are people who try to be that, whether you realize it or not. It's a human sort of righteousness when you try to be more spiritual than Christ.

In fact, the second letter of John warns about that. John is the one who writes a lot about Christ coming in the flesh, which is our example. And he says how this is so important that if you don't confess, second letter of John, verse, it's only one chapter, verse seven, there are many deceivers who've gone into the world.

Second letter of John, chapter one, verse seven. Those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. That means he came like us and could be tempted like us.

That's the meaning. And if a person does not acknowledge that, does not acknowledge that Christ came like us and was tempted like us, to me it's a deceiver. It's the spirit of the Antichrist.

I'm not saying he's the Antichrist, but it's the spirit of the Antichrist. The spirit of Antichrist is that which says we cannot follow Christ. Don't try to tell us to follow him.

That's impossible. That means when Jesus said, follow me, he was telling a lie. He was telling us to do impossible.

That's the spirit of the Antichrist. And so I believe Jesus Christ came in the flesh, was tempted like me. But then he says, watch yourselves.

And verse nine, don't go too far in this teaching. Don't go so far that you say, if you love your enemies, you must fellowship with them also. Be careful.

You go to stop where God stops. You stop where Jesus stops. And the Lord asks us to be gentle like him.

It does not mean we don't rebuke the Pharisees. It does not mean that we don't try to drive out those who try to make money in the temple. No, that is gentleness.

So there is a danger in these things if we don't go to the depths of scripture and go to our spiritual dictionary, which is Jesus Christ. Lord, this is the written word. Let me see in you, the living word, how it was.

And that can be my example. And Jesus told us to learn from him. See, in Matthew chapter 11, he specifically told us to learn from him.

Matthew 11, verse 29, take my yoke upon you and learn from me. Not just from the written Bible. You know, you can read the Bible and get a lot of clever thoughts from it.

And the cleverer you are, the more clever thoughts that will impress intellectual people, but which will not help needy people. Our aim is not to impress the intellectuals. Jesus never tried to impress intellectual people with his clever interpretations.

His aim was always to help the needy. We must always make that our aim. My aim in life is not to impress anyone.

It's to help the needy. There are needy people listening to me. And I must help them.

Whether I impress them or not is absolutely unimposed. Seeking to impress them is only honor seeking. Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

There'll be no unrest in my soul if I'm learning from him. That's what I get from this verse. The way to come to rest in the midst of, like we've heard, a groundhog day or any other type of day, is to go to Jesus and learn from him.

What do I have to learn? Humility, first of all. Lord, let me learn more and more of humility from you. And I tell you, there's no end to learning that.

For many years, I've been impressed by this verse and challenged by it in the Old Testament, in Zephaniah, in chapter two. I hope all of you can quickly turn to Zephaniah. You know where that is, towards the end of the Old Testament.

It's before Haggai and Zechariah. Zephaniah in chapter two. It's a command to the humble people on the earth.

Similar to Matthew 11, verse 29, learn from me. He says here in Zephaniah chapter two, verse three, all you humble of the earth, seek the Lord. This is a command given to the humble of the earth.

And I hope we are among them who come humbly to the Lord without any high thoughts about ourselves, recognizing we are sinners. Till the last day of our life, we must recognize we are sinners saved by grace. Humble of the earth.

And what is the command to the humble of the earth? See in the middle of verse three, seek for more humility. You people who already feel you're quite humble, please seek for more humility. I never get tired of that verse.

You think you're humble, brother? Praise the Lord. All that you've learned of humility from Jesus, wonderful. Seek for more humility.

All the humble of the earth. Learn from me because there's never an end to learning humility from Jesus. And how do I know whether I'm humble? It's not a question of my feeling.

It's not even a question of whether other people who don't have discernment on what humility is think I'm humble. They don't have discernment. They may think I'm humble and they may be completely wrong.

Does God think I am? And I don't believe God leaves us in doubt about it. So for myself, through the years, I have applied a two-fold test to see am I progressing in humility? I don't believe I'll be as humble as Jesus until he comes again. That's understood.

But I must be progressing in humility. And how to know whether I am? Number one test in 1 Peter 5 and verse 5, a well-known verse that we often quote, God gives grace to the humble. If I'm progressing in humility, the proof will be that I will get more and more grace.

And that also, I need to go one step further then. How do I know that I'm getting more and more grace? I don't want to fool myself. So then I go to Romans 6, 14, where I read, sin will not have any power over you if you're under grace.

So that is the test of humility, that those sins that have power over me are gradually losing their power. You don't raise your voice at your husband or your wife or in your office. You can speak firmly in your office to your subordinates.

You can speak firmly to your children. You don't need to speak firmly to your wife or husband. But to our children, yes, and to our subordinates in the office, yes.

But I got to see, have I got victory over dirty thoughts? Ah, then I'm getting grace. If not, I must face it squarely and say, I am not humble. Otherwise I'd get grace.

So these are the ways by which we don't fool ourselves. You know how the Bible, the New Testament keeps on warning us against, let no man deceive himself. That comes a number of times.

Let none of you deceive yourselves. Galatians 6, 3, if anyone thinks he is a somebody when he's a nobody, he's deceiving himself. The Bible warns us about deceiving ourselves.

We read in James, let no one deceive himself. So there's a real possibility of a Christian deceiving himself in this area of humility. So one test is this.

Am I really growing in grace? Am I really overcoming sin in my daily, practically daily, the areas? Am I murmuring? Am I finished with murmuring? Complaining. In fact, that's one of the things mentioned in Philippians 2. That we got to work out our salvation from what? From grumbling and complaining. You notice that? God's word says, work out your salvation with God's help from grumbling and complaining, Philippians 2, verse 12 and 14.

So it's, we got to ask ourselves, am I growing in humility? Am I growing in grace? Here's one test. Is there less and less and less and less grumbling and complaining in your life? Not just at people, but against God, against circumstances. Lord, I'm overcoming it.

I'm such a grumbler and complainer about all types of things. It's becoming better and better. If not, I need to check myself.

I'm not learning humility from Christ. And the other test is, one is grace, which gives me overcoming, power to overcome sin. And the other is what Jesus himself said in Matthew 11, 29.

Learn from me, and you will find rest in your soul. There won't be a panic in your soul. There won't be an unrest.

Even if you're having groundhog days, there will be a rest. You will find rest. So when I don't find rest, and the Lord says I will find rest, I say, Lord, then I've not learned gentleness and humility from you.

Show me what is the gentleness I have to learn from you. What is the humility I have to learn from you so that I'm at rest in my soul and not in constant unrest. Is this going to happen? That going to happen? Am I going to lose my job? Am I going to make a little more money? Rest.

In fact, in Hebrews, it says, this is such an important thing. I don't think we hear much in Christendom about entering into rest, and yet Hebrews 4, 1 says we must be afraid lest we miss out on this rest. Let us fear.

When there's a promise the Lord has given of entering into rest, and that promise is learn from me, for I'm humble in heart, and you'll find rest for your souls. That promise is there. And I come short of it, Hebrews 4, 1, and I'm not afraid.

I don't even fear that I'm losing something God wants me to have. It's very easy, dear brothers and sisters, in a church like NCCF, where we respect God's word and have weekly Bible studies and Sunday meetings and so much of sharing and memory verse, to increase in the knowledge of the word. It's good.

I spent my first seven years after being born again intensely studying the word. And it's helped me tremendously. All these more than 50 years now.

But let us fear that all this study is not allowing us to enter into rest. Let us fear lest we don't enter into rest. Then we've got to come back to that command.

All you humble of the earth, all those of you who think you're humble, seek for more humility. Yeah. May God help us.

It's a lovely song we sang earlier today. He is not a disappointment. He has saved my soul from sin.

All the guilt and the anguish. Not only that, he's saved me from sin. And there's a verse that comes at the end, which is not in most of the, whatever the song is published.

The last verse of it is, let me never disappoint thee through my willfulness of fear. You know, he's not a disappointment. He's not a disappointment.

He has saved my soul from sin and he's coming by and by and he's all in all to me, et cetera, et cetera. But then finally, now Lord, let me never disappoint thee through my willfulness of fear. Knowing Lord, that thou art planning how to make my way most fair.

Then whatever thou appointest, though my reasonings be about that, may I never be offended, resting in thy mighty love. There's a song written about a hundred years ago by a man who really knew Jesus, not a disappointment and wanted never to be a disappointment to the Lord. May the Lord help us.

Amen.

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