

The Way To Growth In Christlikeness

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth in the New Covenant, contrasting it with the static nature of the Old Covenant. It highlights the need for believers to continuously purify themselves to reach the standard of Jesus' purity, focusing on the hope of being like Christ. The sermon delves into the significance of repentance, the various definitions of sin, and the need to understand sin to grow in holiness. It stresses the concept of poverty of spirit and mourning for sin as essential for exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees and possessing God's kingdom.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3, Matthew 5:4, 1 John 3:2, Proverbs 8:34, John 15:5, Galatians 6:3, James 4:8

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Repentance and Holiness"

Description

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Transcript

When we read the New Testament, you know, we've emphasized a lot about the New Covenant being the thing that distinguishes us in CFE churches, but one of the distinctive features of the New Covenant is that there's a possibility of spiritual growth, which was not there in Old Covenant people. They were sort of static in the Old Covenant. They were devoted people like Moses and godly men like Elijah, but there was never an opportunity to grow spiritually to become higher and higher.

Whereas in the New Covenant, we have that possibility. Let me show you a few verses. For example, it says in 1 John 3, 3, that everyone who has the hope, this hope, will purify himself till he reaches the standard of Jesus' purity, which is a progressive thing, but which hope is that? It's not the hope of seeing Christ when he comes.

It is the hope of being like him when we see him when he comes, 1 John 3, 2. So many people have only one part of that hope. He will come and I will see him face to face, but the hope that is mentioned in 1 John 3, 3, he who has this hope mentioned in the previous verse is that when he comes, we will be like him. Now, I don't know how excited you are about that, but to me, that is the most wonderful thing I look

forward to, not just to see my savior, but that I will be so like him that I will never dishonor him by anything in my life thereafter, not a thought or an attitude or a motive or a word or a deed, nothing.

I don't know if that excites you, but it really excites me because there's so many things on this earth that we are grieved by where we let down the Lord somewhere. What a joy it will be to be in the Lord completely free from the love of money and free from everything that Jesus died for in a nutshell, to be like him. But if you have that passion to be like that, you will definitely purify yourself as he is pure.

So the Christian life is a growth and if you are not in that growth, you have to really examine yourself and see where you stand spiritually. Some of you may not even be born again. Yeah, it's possible because there's a lot of delusion.

A lot of people were converted in other churches. I've heard a lot of people who come to our church in Bangalore and said, Brother Zach, I was not even converted till I came here and heard what sin was because there is no salvation without repentance and repentance is never preached in other churches, mostly not even in evangelistic meetings. There's always faith, faith, faith, faith, and faith without repentance is a counterfeit faith.

And what they've said to me is, Brother Zach, we did not know what repentance was because we did not know what sin was. Repentance means to turn away from sin. So how can I turn away from sin if I don't know what sin is? So my definition of sin is very low, like drinking and gambling and smoking and things like that.

Oh, well, a lot of non-Christians don't need to repent because they don't know those things. But when I see what sin really is, and I turn away from that, then I can grow, but then only I'm really saved, really. And so in the Bible, there are different definitions of sin, as we have seen before.

One of the lowest definitions of sin is right here in the same 1 John chapter 3, where it goes on to say that in the next verse, 1 John 3, 4, sin is breaking the law. That means you know something is God's standard and you break it. Thou shalt not do this and you do it.

There could be many things in scripture like that. So that is one part of sin, which is, you know, disobeying something you know you should do, or you should not do. You should not do that, but you do it.

The other definition of sin is the opposite of that. This is doing what you should not do. And the other definition of sin in James 4 is, James 4, the last verse, it says, to him that knows what is right to do and does not do it, it is sin.

This is a more, you know, more subtle thing. It's the things that I know is right, but I don't do it. So one is the sin that I do.

The other is the sin that I don't do. For example, it says, encourage one another daily. It's a command, Hebrews 3.13, and most of us don't do it.

It's a sin, not doing what I know I should do. Now, if you don't know that you should do it, then it's different. It's unconscious sin.

But once I know this is what God wants me to do, and I don't do it. So there are two types of sins, sins of commission and sins of omission. But all that is combined in the definition of sin that we find in Romans

chapter 3, and verse 23, where it's important for us to understand this, because you cannot grow in holiness if you don't know what sin is.

You can't, you know, know what white is if you don't know what black is and what gray is. So in the same way, Romans 3.23 says all have sin. Here's the definition of sin.

Even higher than those two we saw in John 3 and James 4. It's not just doing what's wrong or not doing what we know we should do. It's more than that. It is coming short of the glory of God.

Now the glory of God is a phrase that we find often in scripture. And most of us, at least in my case, for many years, I didn't know what it was. Most of us think of it as some bright light, the glory of God.

It's very much more practical than that. In the Old Testament, that's what they thought, the glory of God, the brightness of God's presence in heaven. But in the New Testament, it's much more clear.

It says in John chapter 1, that the glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ, John 1.14. The glory of the Father, full of grace and truth, is the nature of Christ, full of grace and truth, which is the glory of God. So you put that definition into Romans 3.23, it reads like this. All have sinned and come short of the standard of Christ's life.

That means the life of Christ is the ultimate definition of what sin is. Anything that's not part of that life is sin. And if I don't live by that standard of sin, any other standard of sin is lower.

I will never press on. I'll never see my need, and then I don't grow spiritually. So in other words, the way I put it is like this, that anything in my life that I cannot do in fellowship with Jesus Christ, it's sin.

If I can say something to somebody, which I can't say with Jesus standing right there in front of me, listening to me, it's sin. However much you may justify yourself in the way you spoke to somebody, your wife or husband, if you cannot speak like that in the presence of Christ, your wife or husband, it's sin. That's how seriously we must take sin in our life.

Would you do that if Jesus Christ was standing right next to you? Would you speak like that if Jesus Christ was standing right there? Can you do this in fellowship with Christ, whenever you're signing a document perhaps? Sometimes the question comes, is that absolute truth that you're signing? Or is it a slightly false statement? The question is this, can you ask Jesus to sign there in that document as a witness? Or would Jesus hesitate saying, I can't sign as a witness because what you've signed there is not absolutely true. If you keep the standard, you'll really grow spiritually. But if you compromise on that, there are many things to be gained in the world by compromising in these areas.

That's true because the devil said even to Jesus, I'll give you many things in the world if you bow down and worship me. So if I bow down to the devil and compromising, telling a little lie or making a slightly false statement or doing something unrighteous, the devil is offering me, I'll give you the whole world, I'll give you many things in the world. And there are believers who are bowing down to Satan and these little things in their office or some other area, just to get a little gain and make a little more money.

And they don't realize that they're getting it straight from the hands of the devil. So we need to be very careful to see that we keep the standard of sin where the Bible keeps it. Anything that comes short of the glory of God, of the life of Christ is sin.

And you say that's a very high standard. That's right. And that's why Jesus said to his disciples, unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, that's what he said in Matthew chapter five and verse 20, unless your righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees was a pretty high standard of righteousness. Their external life was pure. Jesus himself testified to that.

It's one of the good things he said about the Pharisees in Matthew 23. He said, you clean the outside of the cup. Matthew 23 and verse 25, you clean the outside of the cup.

He gave a certificate to the Pharisees, your external life, according to the standard of the law is clean. That means you keep the nine commandments. The first nine external life was good, but this is your internal life is bad.

So the, and the other thing he told the Pharisees was that all your doctrines are right. Matthew 23 verse two and three, he told his disciples everything they teach is right. So when we have, when our life is such that our doctrines are all a hundred percent right and our external life is clean, let me repeat that.

Matthew 23 two and three, when our doctrine is a hundred percent right, which Jesus can certify and verse 25, when our external life is clean, we have attained to the righteousness of the Pharisees. That's old covenant righteousness. But the Lord said, unless your righteousness goes beyond that, you're not going to enter into God's kingdom.

Are any of you sitting under the delusion that you're going to enter into God's kingdom just because you've got all your doctrines, right? You come to CFC, but the doctrines are all pure and your external life, you have cleaned it up so well that your external testimony is absolutely righteous. You don't enter the kingdom of heaven. Sorry.

It has to exceed that. And when we think of exceeding in our mind, we always think in terms of quantity, more and more and more and more. But he's not talking about quantity.

He's talking about quality because he explains that in the remaining verses. Pharisee's life was murder. My standard is anger.

Don't murder. Don't get angry. Pharisee's standard was don't commit adultery.

I say, don't even lust. Don't divorce your wife. And Pharisee's standard was love only your brothers.

I teach you love your enemies. So it was an inner quality of life that the Lord was saying, your quality of life must be superior to the Pharisees, not quantity of praying more or going to more meetings or knowing more of the Bible. No, no, no, no.

A quality of life, which is fundamentally different from that of the Pharisees. And if I don't concentrate on that, I'm not going to grow spiritually. And then I'm going to be very careful.

Like I've often said, if a plane is not moving forward, it's going to sink. Every aircraft, unless it's a helicopter, is going to stay in the air only as it's moving. The moment it stops moving, it drops.

So if I'm not progressing in my Christian life, I am going down spiritually. There is no such thing as being static in the Christian life. No.

And God's will is that we should be progressing. And just like in school, we want our children to go from one class to another every year, at least once a year, they should get a promotion to the next grade. And it's good.

That's why I say it's good to evaluate ourselves at least once a year and go on from there to even a higher level. Let me show you the standard of Paul's life. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, he says, we are being changed.

He's talking about himself. 2 Corinthians 4, 16. He says, this outer man, you have an old man, is decaying.

The physical man is getting weaker and weaker because he's getting old. But the inner man is being renewed into the likeness of Christ. How frequently, Paul, how frequently are you growing? Every day.

Imagine coming to a life in Christ where every day you become a little more Christ-like than you were the previous day. You think that's too high a goal? Well, Paul had it. Our inner man, he's inspired by the Holy Spirit.

He can't be telling a lie. My inner man, Paul is saying, is being renewed day by day, not year by year, which itself is a wonderful thing. In other words, if you have overcome since now, which you were defeated by last year, wonderful, you've come to a higher class.

But don't be satisfied there. Progress from there to every month and finally to every day. That is God's will.

And the way to do that is by really ruthlessly judging ourselves. Whenever we seem to keep a good conscience immediately and ask yourself, why did I slip up there? Where was I proud that God could not give me grace? Help me to be more alert so that I don't slip up in that same area next time. And it may be slow progress, but it'll really make a difference.

Devotion to Christ will increase more and more. The Old Testament Book of Proverbs, you know, I always call the Book of Proverbs a new covenant book in the Old Testament because it's one of those amazing verses where God gives grace to the humble. It's not only in James 4 and 1 Peter 5, it's first found in Proverbs chapter 3, verse 34 in the old covenant book.

He gives grace to the afflicted, means the humble in that language, in the Hebrew languages. He gives grace to the humble. So Proverbs is an amazing book.

There are many, many things in here which talk about new covenant standards in the middle of the Old Testament. And here it says in Proverbs 4 and verse 18, describing the path of a truly righteous man. It's like the light of dawn, which in the sunrise, he says is equal to being born again.

And it rises up in the sky until it comes to the full noonday position, which is when Christ returns and we will be like him. So this is exactly what we read in 1 John 3 too. When we see him, we'll be like him.

So from the time we are born again, which is sunrise, and to the time when we become like him, which is the noonday position, God's will is just like the sun, little by little by little. I mean, if you look at the sun, you don't see it moving in the sky. It's not moving.

It's slowly, slowly, slowly, it's so, but you know, you look at it a couple of hours later, it's not in the same position. So it's just like the growth in our children. You don't measure their height every day to see what they've grown taller.

But a year later, you say, Hey, my son or daughter is much taller than he or she was last year. So it is God's will that we progressively become bright, our life becomes brighter and brighter, means more and more Christ-like. That is God's will.

And the sun is, I mean, figuratively, it's not moving. We know that. But in our eyes, it's constantly moving all the time, from sunrise to noonday position.

There's never a time when that sun is standing still. And there's never a time when it backslides. No.

And so God's will for the righteous person, for your life, my life, is that we never backslide even for a single moment, for a single day, anytime in our life. If you have attained to a certain level in our Christian life, we should never go lower than that at any time. We should be progressing like the sun.

Keep this in your mind always, my life, my growth in Christ must be like the sun. And if it is not like the sun, something is wrong. And I need to work on it and not wake up at the judgment seat of Christ and discover that I missed out completely on what God wanted me to be like.

Another verse, Romans 8, it says here in Romans 8 and verse 29, that God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son. And we are to be transformed to that image little by little. And we connect with that.

We connect with 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, where it says, as we look into the face of the Lord, into the standard of glory that we see in the life of Jesus Christ, this is our guide. 2 Corinthians 3, 18. You know, Hebrews 12 says, we run the race looking unto Jesus.

That means, what it means is what I've just been saying. That is the only standard I'm going to look at. I'm not going to look at other godly believers around me.

They can challenge me. Their example in their life can challenge me, but that's not where I'm going to end. No, because that person I admired today may stop growing after a while.

Yeah, I'm not going to make any human being my example unless he's constantly following after Christ, like Paul. Then I can make him my example. That means I see in him a growth, an increasing Christ-likeness, an increasing revelation and knowledge of God coming forth.

So in 2 Corinthians 3, 18, it says, as we look at the glory of the Lord, full of grace and truth, the life of Christ, the Holy Spirit changes us from one degree of glory to another by the Holy Spirit. It says it's a beautiful verse, 2 Corinthians 3, 18. That is spiritual growth, and every one of us must long for this to be true in our life.

Now we turn to Matthew chapter 5. I'm telling you that, showing you that verse, your righteousness must exceed qualitatively the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. So we have learned in the study of scripture that we must study scripture in its context, what comes immediately before, what comes immediately after. So if you take Matthew 5, 20 and study it in the context of what comes afterwards, there are many, many things there that come after that, Matthew 6, Matthew 7, 5, 6, and 7, and then what

comes before that as well.

And if you look at that, what comes before that, he speaks, he uses another in verse 13 of being, we are the salt of the earth. And you know, the important thing about salt is not quantity, but quality. You can have a mountain of salt and it adds no taste to your food if it is not salty.

He says that if it has become tasteless, many believers have become tasteless. So when he speaks about exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees in the context, he's speaking about salt being tasty. And the other illustration he uses is light, Matthew 5, 14, the salt and the light.

But again, the important thing is not how big the bulb is, but how much light does it give. You can have a small torch light, which is more powerful than a zero watt bulb, small laser light can be so powerful. So it's not size, it's the power of that light, it's the taste of that salt.

So in all these examples, he was talking about quality, quality, quality, the quality of my love, the quality of my holiness, the quality of my mercy towards others, et cetera. And he speaks about the danger of salt becoming tasteless, verse 13, Matthew 5, 13. In other words, it was good salt when you started out your Christian life, you were really zealous.

Think back to your own, the way you began your Christian life, all of you who are listening here. How is it then? Are you more zealous today? I'm not talking about activity. I'm not talking about how many people you brought to Christ or how much you studied the Bible.

Have you become more Christ-like? Did you have a passion to become Christ-like some years ago, which you've sort of lost out on? And the salt has become tasteless. And if you keep on like that, like I said, that plane will finally come crashing down to earth and lose your salvation completely. Yeah, that's a possibility.

And we've got to be very careful. And so this example of salt and light is again referring to quality. And again, in the context of what is here, we see what Jesus spoke in Matthew 5, verses 3 to 12.

Those are what are called Beatitudes. And there, if you look at them carefully, when I studied the Sermon on the Mount sometime ago, I saw in these nine right attitudes, Matthew 5, verses 3 to 12, and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, I saw nine wrong attitudes. So spiritual growth is to grow in these nine right attitudes and to completely eliminate from my life the nine wrong attitudes that come up in the rest of Matthew 5 and chapter 6 and chapter 7. So just look at this, for example, briefly, at some of these right attitudes.

He begins with being poor in spirit. It's very important to understand that because that, I say, that is the first step. The entire kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God mean the same thing.

Matthew called it kingdom of heaven. Mark and all call it the kingdom of God. It's the same thing.

I can possess all of God's kingdom. God's kingdom can run my life. I can possess it all with one master key, poverty of spirit.

It opens every door to all the treasures in the kingdom of heaven. If I can remain poor in spirit till the end of my life, I'll possess all of God's wealth, as much as a human being can possess before he gets into glory. That should be your passion.

The kingdom of heaven is theirs. But I really believe that most believers, I would say most, I would say more than 90% of believers, when they finally stand before the Lord, they'll discover they're so poor spiritually when they have the opportunity to become rich. See, many of you migrate to other countries.

You can earn more money and give a better education to your children. Good. You have more savings.

You have more earthly wealth. And you work so hard. Many people who I know, many people who migrate to other countries work so hard to make sure all the applications are filled properly, all the necessary papers, they go here and there to get the necessary documents in order to file their application.

Imagine if we took that much pains to become spiritually wealthy. Lord, I want to be spiritually wealthy. I really want to be spiritually wealthy.

Well, here's a secret. Learn how to be poor in spirit till the end of your life. To be poor in spirit, you know, I've always found in reading the Bible, I understand it better if I apply it with the way Jesus used to use illustrations.

So man is spirit, soul, and body. So to understand poor in spirit, let me start with poor in body. Poor in body, we have plenty of examples of that.

In many countries, those are the homeless people and the poor people who are the beggars. In India, the beggars come to the gate and knock at the gate and ask for money. And they're not ashamed to do that.

They're always needy. They come to the gate and say, Sir, could you give me a little money? I don't have anything to eat. And you give them a little money.

When you come back the next day, you say, Sir, can you come back next day because you know you're a generous guy. And say, could you give me some more? And you ask, where's the money I gave you yesterday? Oh, sir, that was only enough for yesterday. I need some today as well.

That is real poverty in the body. Apply that to poverty in spirit, where every day you go before God and say, Lord, I'm needy. The grace I got yesterday is not good enough.

That's only enough for yesterday. I want something now. Seeking God for power and grace, that's poor in spirit.

That means you're aware of your need all the time, not just once a day, but all the time. See this verse in Proverbs chapter 8. It says in Proverbs 8 and verse 34, it's the illustration of this beggar standing at the gate. Like I said in India, they stand at the gate.

And the Lord says in Proverbs 8, 34, Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates. Picture the beggar. He can't survive that day unless he gets some money from someone.

If he doesn't get it from your gate, he'll go to the next gate. Blessed is the man who watches daily at my gates, waiting at my doorpost until he gets what he wants. And he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord.

Favor is what in the New Testament is called grace. He gets grace from the Lord because he waits daily. That to me is poverty of spirit.

And I'd say more than daily. It's a moment by moment thing that I'm constantly aware that I need help from God. This is the man who will be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit.

Use the illustration, which is one of my favorite illustrations, which I always use, the branch in the tree. All the time aware I can produce no fruit without that sap, not once a day, more than a beggar, but moment by moment. And that is poverty of spirit.

Lord, I cannot make it. Without you, I can do nothing. I believe that's one of the greatest lessons that a true Christian can learn if he wants to grow spiritually, what Jesus taught in John 15.

It's the very same illustration I used just now. John 15 and verse five. If you abide in me, like the branch in the tree, you will bear much fruit.

Without me, you can do nothing. I paraphrase that like this, that anything that you can do without Christ, without the Lord's help, has got no eternal value. It may have a lot of value on the earth.

It may get you a name as a wonderful Christian or a very generous man or a good man and all that type of stuff, which has no value in heaven. But if you want something of eternal worth to be done through your life, learn the life of dependence on God. That is faith.

Without faith, it is impossible to please him. And this is what I want to encourage all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, to develop, a life of faith. And unfortunately, this living by faith has been devalued and its meaning is so degenerated in Christendom.

It refers to full-time workers trusting the Lord for money. That's not living by faith. Most of those full-time workers are hinting all the time of their need for sending prayer letters.

They just fool people saying they're living by faith. Living by faith is not for full-time Christian workers. Living by faith is for every single believer.

And it's got nothing to do with money. Hebrews 11 has got nothing to do with money. It's got to do with the life of dependence upon God.

Faith is this life of perpetual dependence upon God, like the branch in the tree, recognizing without me, you can do zero. It's perpetual. It's not once a day.

It's not going to the gates once a day, like in Proverbs, but all the time. Lord, I need you every moment, moment by moment, I need you. Not I need you every hour, which is great.

I need you moment by moment, every moment. Without you, I can do nothing. That is poverty of spirit.

And I tell you, it's not easy to get there. If you make a beginning now and really seek to come into that life, you can come to that life. I can't say I've got there myself, but it's a lot better now than it was years ago, where living in constant dependence on the Lord, moment by moment, for grace to overcome sin and grace for any ministry, grace to live the way God wants me to do, grace to know what God's will is for the next step in life, and et cetera, et cetera, grace for you to be parents to your children.

Boy, what I need there is there. Moment by moment, dependence upon God. You have a rebellious child or a difficult child or a problem child or some other physical need or financial need in your home, moment by moment, dependence upon the Lord.

My dear brother, sister, covet this. Long for a life of moment by moment, dependence on the Lord. This is the way of spiritual growth.

This is poverty of spirit. And the promise is the entire kingdom of God is yours. Every door in the kingdom of God is open to you.

The treasures in that kingdom are yours, but this is the master key, poverty of spirit. You know, in Galatians, it says in chapter six, Galatians six, there's quite a warning here in Galatians six, three. If anyone thinks he is a somebody when he's a nobody or a nothing, he's deceiving himself.

Now this is written to believers. Galatians was not written to unbelievers, it's written to believers. Is it possible for a believer to think he has become somebody? Sure.

I've seen elders in CFC churches who after a while, they begin to think they are somebody. It's because they were appointed as elders. And then I've seen from that point of time, that downfall and a little while, some of them are finally removed from eldership.

That's happened in CFC churches. I can think of a number of them over the years. And it all began with that beginning to think that they are somebody.

It's very, very easy because because when he's a nobody, to think that he's a somebody. Are you willing to recognize that in God's eyes, apart from Christ, you're a zero? Without me, you can do nothing. So all that you do without Christ is zero in eternal value.

I'm really nobody, but if I'm poor in spirit, I'd be valuable in God's kingdom because all of God's treasures will be mine. So it says here, if anyone thinks Galatians six, three, that he's somebody when he's a nobody, he's just deceiving himself. He may be fooling a few others, maybe many other Christians who don't have discernment.

They also think you're somebody because you preach well, or you impress impressive personality, or you're a very educated person or something like that. And you can deceive all those people. God's not fooling.

The devil's not fooled. He's not fooled by all that. If you really want to accomplish something for God's kingdom, recognize that you're nothing and a nobody.

That I can accomplish nothing of eternal value without God's help. And therefore it says, examine your own work and recognize how it is in your life. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the blessing of God.

I want the blessing of God in my life. So most of the prayers, believers are Lord blessed. Okay.

He blesses you if you're poor in spirit. Next time you pray, Lord bless me. Think of this verse.

You'll be blessed if you recognize that you can do nothing without the Lord. If you recognize that you're a nobody, you recognize that apart from Christ, you can do zero. You'll really be blessed.

Otherwise you can keep on saying, bless me, bless me for 50 years. Nothing will happen in your life. But if you take this blessed out of poor in spirit, you can possess the kingdom of heaven.

Here is where our righteousness must be beyond the righteousness of the Pharisees. They were not poor in spirit. They thought they were clever and accomplished and they could boss over others and show off and all that.

There's nothing of the sense of need that a true disciple of Jesus has. And even the disciples who Jesus chose in the beginning, they didn't have a sense of need. Think of the apostle Peter, very zealous, very active, but he had no sense of need that apart from Christ, I'll even deny him.

He never felt that. He said, no, I'll never deny you. He didn't realize his need.

So blessed are the poor in spirit. And I want to encourage your brothers and sisters right till the end of your life. Learn more and more what poverty of spirit is.

Okay. We go to the next thing, which is Matthew 5, 4. We're trying to understand how our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. These are all qualities the Pharisees never had.

Nine good qualities. The Pharisees had none of them. And number one was they didn't have poverty of spirit.

Now the purpose is to possess God's kingdom. That's the ultimate goal in our life. The kingdom of God is within you, Jesus said.

And I want all of my life, which once belonged to the devil and myself to be replaced by entire, my inner life is the kingdom of God within me. So the second thing Jesus said was, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. And whenever I read comforted, I think of that middle of that word, F-O-R-T, fort.

And I think of a picture of strength. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be strengthened. What do we mourn for? The world is full of people who want others to feel sorry for them.

Mourn for, oh, I lost this. I lost some money. I didn't get that promotion.

I didn't get admission into that school or college, or I couldn't marry that girl. I couldn't marry that boy. They're mourning for all these things.

And so many things like that. Oh, look what the evil people are talking about me and feeling sorry for oneself for something in this world, or because we lost our reputation and we lost a job, or we didn't get a visa. A hundred and one worldly things, even believers are weeping and mourning over that.

We must finish with it. I mean, finish with it. A wholehearted disciple needs never mourn for anything that's happening in the world.

Yes. I mean, if a loved one dies, naturally there is a mourning in the external man, but this is talking about inner mourning. And that inner mourning is in a true disciple of Jesus is only for one reason.

Lord, I'm not like Jesus. I want to be like Jesus. I mourn for my sin.

If I slip up somewhere, when was the last time you mourned when you slipped up in sin? Can you remember? I don't mean when you lost your testimony publicly, you lost angry and people in the church heard it and they, oh boy, your reputation was gone and you went and mourned. Dang, you're not mourning for your sin. No.

You're mourning that you lost your reputation before other believers. That's not worth anything. That's seeking honor.

Wrong type of mourning. I'll tell you whether you, how to check out whether your mourning is really mourning inwardly before God. When you have a bad thought, a lustful thought, or a wrong attitude towards a brother, which nobody knows, your wife doesn't know, your brother doesn't know, your sister, nobody knows.

It's just inward. It came just for a few moments and you relished it and enjoyed it for 10 seconds. That's all.

Did it bring a mourning in your life? That's the type of mourning I'm talking about. Lord, that was a wrong attitude. That is a really filthy thought.

That was a wrong motive with which I did that thing. Nobody saw it. It's all inward.

Not a soul knows about it. And you mourn. Blessed are such people.

These are the people who are being blessed by God. These are the people whose righteousness far exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees. The Pharisees did not mourn for inward sins.

They mourned for external sins, like a lot of believers. Here it's talking about that inner areas of our life where we did not, perhaps did not react in a Christlike way. We mourn when somebody got upset with us.

How did I react to that? Do I react? It's a growth, I tell you. We don't initially react. Initially, we react like Adam.

But we must, you know how children are. When somebody hits them, they hit back. And there's a sense in which even as believers, we don't use our fists, but we can hit back with words.

I remember, it takes time, but if you're really serious, we can grow pretty quickly, at least in the way we speak. I remember the days when I used to ride a scooter in India. I rode that for 42 years.

And, you know, very often roads are so crowded, people don't keep to the lanes. And very often you can collide with others who don't often show a signal when they're turning right or anything. And sometimes here, an example, somebody would just turn in front of me without showing a signal.

And I would, nothing serious happened. Maybe a scooter touched his scooter. And I would say to him, initially, this was my first step.

Who gave you a driving license? Well, we bought company and the Lord says, Jesus wouldn't speak like that. And I repent. I say, Lord, that's not the way I should speak.

I'm a child of God, forgive me, that was a sin. That guy's gone now, otherwise I'd have gone and apologized to him. And then I'd move on from there to another stage.

And the next time I knock against someone, I don't say it, I just glare at him. And then the Lord says to me, Jesus wouldn't glare like that. So I move up higher and higher.

The next time I hit someone, I say, I'm sorry, sir, even though it was his fault. I'm willing to take the blame, let him be happy. Because you know, everybody's happy when you say, I'm sorry, I've discovered that in all the roads in India.

Even if it's 100% his fault, you say, I'm sorry, or he'll smile at you and say, it's okay. I should be the one telling him it's okay. He's dented my scooter, that's all right.

I want to behave like Christ. And I'll tell you something, if you pursue this, it'll affect many, many areas of your life. I'm just giving you one example.

It'll affect many areas in your life where you're not so quick to blame other people. Like I've often said, you never go to your children or to anybody else and say, I told you that. No.

The world is full of people, including you and I, we messed up our life in so many ways in the past. Children make a mess. Don't say, I told you that.

Say, let's fix it. That's the way we should do it. Not I told you, the great expert, the professor saying, I told you that's not the way to do it.

Okay. The Lord never speaks to me like that. If I go to him, I mean, disobeyed him and messed up my life in some area.

The Lord doesn't say, I told you that. The Lord says, let's fix it. Let's blot out the past and press on and help you not to do that again.

I say, Lord, I want to be like that. I want to mourn where I'm not reacting like Jesus, like God has reacted to me when I fail. Those are the areas we need to mourn.

And it says here, if I mourn, that means I mourn because I really feel I've lost something. I would be strengthened in that area. I want to encourage you, just like I encourage you to be like that beggar, longing, dependent on the Lord saying you can accomplish nothing.

Here's the second thing. If you want your righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, develop the habit of mourning for every little thing. Yeah, there are times in my life now and then when I've even more in the early days when I wept on my pillow at night.

Oh Lord Jesus, I'm sorry. There's a lack of inner purity there. I want to be totally like Jesus in my thoughts and my attitudes and my motives that it would make me weep, literally.

The tears would come out of my eyes. And boy, I tell you, God strengthened me. It's really true.

Blessed, you know, the Amplified Bible says happy to be envied is the man who mourns for his sin, the man who recognizes that without Christ he can do nothing, who's poor in spirit, who's constantly depending upon God. This is how, not only this is how our righteousness will be more than the righteousness of the Pharisees, this is how your salt will not lose its savor. That's what it's coming to in verse 13.

If you don't want the salt in your life, the quality of Christianity in your life, of the life of Christ in you, not to decrease, meditate on these nine good qualities. We'll just look at two of them. It's a very blessed passage.

It's the first major teaching in the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount. And Jesus said at the end of it, if you hear these words and do them, your life will be like a house built on a rock, unshakable. But if you just listen to them like you're listening to me today and you don't take it seriously, Jesus also said at the

end, how your house may stand for some time, one day a storm will come, your whole thing will collapse.

So I want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, as we have a lot of time now at home by ourselves, take time to judge yourself, to study the scriptures, and really make these days when we have more leisure time at home, to become more Christ-like in our behavior at home. You know, when we're all living together so close, so many things can come that we can get irritated with one another very easily. Because in the olden days, we were away from home for so long and not so much opportunity to be together.

But you know, when we are living close to each other, there can be that rubbing, children provoking us all the time, and husband and wife all the time at home, there can be things that rub together, and we can easily get upset and irritated. Get down before God and mourn. Say, Lord, that's not the way I should behave.

That's not the way I would behave if I recognize Jesus is living in my house right now. I want to repent. I want to mourn.

And you may have to literally mourn sometimes. But you can be absolutely sure you'll be blessed. Lord, bless me.

Make me a mourner. Lord, bless me. Make me poor in spirit.

The kingdom of God will be mine. If you look at people, you find in their life they possess God's kingdom. The life of Christ is coming more and more in their life and in their behavior, their conduct.

You can be pretty sure there are people who have gone before God like the beggar, seeking for his help constantly, and who have mourned in their life over secret sin. That's the way, that's the way they got there, and you can get there too. May the Lord help us.

Let us pray. A while ahead is a bowed in prayer. Let's think a little about what we heard today.

If you've got a small morsel, you don't need too much. You know, we don't need information. We just need enough food to chew on, digest, and make a part of ourselves.

Help us, Lord, to satisfy your heart by seeking to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, by the standard you call us to. We want to grow in likeness to Christ. Bless every family here.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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