

(The Works of Faith) Why God Allows Us to Fall

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen explores the reasons behind God's allowance of our failures and the importance of faith and humility in overcoming life's trials.

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Scripture: John 21:1

Topics: "Spiritual Failure", "Humility Before God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the feeling of hopelessness that can arise when we repeatedly fail in our attempts to live a holy life. He uses the example of the disciples who, after a night of unsuccessful fishing, were ready to give up. However, Jesus appeared and asked them if they had caught any fish, prompting them to confess their failure. The speaker emphasizes the importance of humbling ourselves before God and confessing our failures. He also highlights the need to avoid pride and judgment towards others who may be struggling in the same areas where we have found victory.

Transcript

There are many things that happen in our lives that we can be puzzled about. The Bible says that God's ways are different from our ways, as different as heaven is from earth. In other words, the way God does something is not the way we think He should do it.

And that's because He's different. He's got wisdom and we don't have. We think God should do something in a certain way and He doesn't do it that way.

He says, my ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. If we were in God's position, we'd probably crush the devil and destroy him in a moment.

But God doesn't do it. He allows the devil to roam around freely on the earth and create so much havoc and confusion. He allows demons to move around.

If we were in God's position, we probably wouldn't do that. But when we see that God's allowed all that, we humble ourselves and say, God, you're wiser than us and there must be some very good reason why you've allowed that, some very good reason why you don't answer our prayers the way we want it to be answered. You do answer prayer, but not often the way we think it should be answered.

Even Jesus in Gethsemane prayed for something and He never got what He wanted. So we're not the first ones to get prayers not answered. Jesus said, I don't want to drink this cup, but the Father said, no, you've got to drink it.

And He drank it. He cried out on the cross. He asked a question on the cross.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He wanted an answer. No answer. He died without getting an answer.

He accepted it. And in spite of there being no answer, He said at the end of His life, Father, I commit my spirit in Your hands. Even if I don't get an answer and if I don't understand, I still commit my spirit in Your hands.

That was submission. It's easy to submit when we know the answers and we know why God is doing something. But it's quite another thing to submit when we don't understand and we don't know.

That's true submission. It's the mark of true faith to say, Lord, I don't understand why You're doing it like this, but I trust You. I trust You completely.

Your ways are perfect. And my ways are not Your ways, but Your ways are perfect. One of the things which I was thinking of sharing this evening was, one of the things we can't understand is why God allows us, even though we're longing for a victorious life, why He allows us to fall so often.

We pray for victory and it doesn't come overnight. We fall and we get up and we fall and we get up and we fall and we get up. And all the time we're crying for victory over a habit or a sin or a problem and we seem to fall again.

And does the Lord want us? Is He able to keep us from falling? He certainly is. Turn to Luke chapter 22. I remember, I've read this portion for about 40 years, but it was only about two years ago that I noticed something.

You know how you can read the Bible for so many times and yet it's when you read it, suddenly you notice something. Here we read about Jesus telling Simon Peter, Simon, Simon, verse 31, Behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. And we know there are a number of things we can learn here before we go to the next verse.

That for a child of God, and Simon was a child of God, Peter, the devil had to get permission from God before he did something to Simon. And that's good for us to remember. That strengthens our faith.

That whatever comes into your life, Satan has gone to God and got permission to do that to you. Because the Bible says that God will never allow us to be tested beyond our ability. That's a wonderful promise in 1 Corinthians 10, 13.

God will not allow any of us to be tested beyond our ability. That's like saying that you won't allow your little boy to carry a weight or a suitcase or a bag that's too heavy for him to carry. We don't do that with our own children and God doesn't do that either.

He will not allow us ever, ever in our life to face a trial which is too much for us to bear or too heavy for us. Have you heard people say, Lord, this is getting too much for me? No, it isn't. God's promised it will never be too much for you and He's not a liar.

With that trial, He'll give you grace to be able to bear it and you'll come out of it a stronger person. So, when the devil comes to God and asks for permission to do something to any of us, God sometimes gives him permission. He gives him permission because he wants to make us better people.

You read in the book of Job how the devil came to God and asked permission to trouble Job to kill his children, to take away his health and God permitted him, but at the end of it all, Job came out a better man. And these things are written in the scriptures to teach us that whatever you go through, first of all you must remember the devil went to God and got permission to try us in that way and God saw whether we were strong enough to face that trial and then only did he permit that to come across our path. I've seen that in many situations in my own life where a trial comes to me and it can be pretty heavy and I think, well, the devil got permission from God.

It's only then it came. Maybe the devil went to God 2-3 years earlier and said, can I send this trial into Zach's life? And God said, no, he's not ready for it, he's not strong enough. He goes and asks in the next year and God says, no, he's not strong enough, you can't send it to him yet.

And then he goes one year to God and God says, okay, now you can send it. He's strong enough now. So when I look at it like this, that when God sends a trial into my life, it means he has the confidence that now I'm strong enough to handle that.

And it makes a tremendous difference when I see that every single thing that comes into my life, which is evil, which has come to harm me, to try me, to test me, it has come after the devil took permission from God. And God is going to use this to make me a stronger person and a better Christian, one who can sympathize and understand what other people are going through. I remember once when I was going through not a big trial but something small and I said, Lord, why didn't you deliver me from this? And the Lord said to me that many of my countrymen in India who were poor were going through this struggle.

And if I was not willing to go through a similar struggle like my fellow countrymen, I would not be able to help them. I had to go through it to understand what other poor people in my country were going through. Then I'd be able to help them.

Otherwise, I'd be preaching theories to them. So I discover it's not just to make me strong that God takes me through certain trials, but it's also so that I can have a ministry to other people. And a lot of Christians don't have any ministry to other people because any time God sends a little trial across their life, they complain and murmur and grumble so much that they get nothing out of it.

So it shouldn't be like that in our lives. You must remember what Jesus said. Simon, Simon, and you can put your name there.

Satan has asked permission from God to sift you like wheat. Now, in India, I don't know whether you do sifting of wheat here. Perhaps you get it all clean in the store.

But when we get wheat in India, it's filled with a lot of chaff and stones and so many things that when we bring it home from the store, the first thing we've got to do is sift it and throw away all the worthless stuff and keep the real grains of wheat. It's only then that we can grind it and bake it or put it in the oven or anything to make bread. But the first step is sifting.

And in that sifting is to throw away all the rubbish and all the useless stuff which is mixed up with the wheat so that we are left with only the wheat. And that's the picture Jesus used here, that Satan is coming

to shake you up, Simon Peter, now. But when you get shaken up like that, it's only going to be a sifting.

It's going to be a getting rid from your life of all the useless things which are going to be a hindrance to you in any case. So, the other thing we see here is that when this trial came, you see a number of things. First of all, that Satan had to get permission and that that permission would be granted only when I'm strong enough to bear that trial.

And when it finally comes my way, it's only going to sift me and take out from my life the things that are useless and worthless. And the other thing we see here is in verse 32, Jesus said, But Simon, I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail. So that's the other thing that whenever we go through a trial, we can be absolutely sure that Jesus is praying for us.

And the interesting thing which I saw here, this is what I said I hadn't noticed before. Now, we would have thought that Jesus should pray that Peter may not fall in that trial. You know, the trial was that Satan was going to tempt him to deny Jesus three times.

And each time Satan tempted Peter, he fell. He fell the first time, he fell the second time, he fell the third time. And don't you think that Jesus should have prayed, Father, I pray that Simon will not fall.

And that appears to be the sensible prayer to pray. But that's not what he prayed. And he has more wisdom than us.

It's very interesting, you know, the question I asked in the beginning was, Why does God allow us to fall so many times? Why did God allow Peter to fall? There was a purpose behind it. What did Jesus actually pray for Peter? Not that he should not fall. And many times he does not pray for us that we should not fall.

But what he did pray for Peter was that when Peter fell, and fell a second time, and fell a third time, and would be tempted to be discouraged, and would be tempted to give up all hope, that at that point, when he'd reached rock bottom, he would not lose his faith. So that's the only thing Jesus prayed for. Father, he's going to fall, okay, let him fall, I don't mind that.

But when he falls, don't let him lose his faith in the fact that God loves him still. You know, that's the great danger. That when we fall, and we reach rock bottom, we can get so discouraged, that we can think God doesn't love us anymore, because I've fallen so many times.

I've let him down so many times. And that's exactly how Peter felt. He felt so bad that he denied the Lord three times, and he went out and wept bitterly.

That he never wanted to be an apostle again. We read at one time later that he says, I'm going back to my fishing. In John chapter 21, he gathers a number of the other disciples and says, I'm going back to my fishing.

I don't want to be an apostle anymore. I tried for three and a half years. I'm just a total failure.

But Jesus had prayed for him, that he would not lose his faith. And we find that Peter finally comes on the day of Pentecost and becomes the great apostle that he became. But that's because Jesus prayed that he would not lose faith.

That from that place of total failure, he could rise up to be such an effective servant of God. So, why then does God allow this failure? And I want you to turn to John chapter 21 and see something there. That's

blessed my heart through many, many years.

That helped me to understand why God allows us to fall and fail so many times. God's desire for every single one of us is that we might be victorious. Overcomers.

You must remember this. However many times you have failed in however many areas, never, never give up faith in this fact, that God wants you to be victorious. God wants you to be an overcomer.

He does not want you to remain defeated, defeated, defeated forever. He wants you to be an overcomer. Whatever habit you are being enslaved to right now, I want to tell you in Jesus' name, that God wants you to be an overcomer in that area.

This is faith. Lord, I believe I have failed ten thousand times in this area. I have fallen so many times.

But I believe you are going to help me to be an overcomer. It could be anger or lust or bitterness or whatever it is. It makes no difference.

If you can say, Lord, I believe that your will is that in this area I should be an overcomer. God will do it in your life. That's what we see in John chapter 21.

John chapter 21 we read of the last miracle that Jesus did. And that miracle had, that's the last miracle that Jesus ever did on earth. And that miracle was, as it were, teaching the apostles a great lesson.

And what was that lesson? They went out, we read one evening, at six o'clock perhaps in the evening, Simon Peter called six others and all seven of them went fishing. Verse 3. He said, I'm going fishing. In other words, what he was saying is, I'm going back to my fishing.

Jesus called me three and a half years ago to quit my fishing and be an apostle. I tried that for three and a half years and I'm a failure. But there's one thing I can still do.

I can fish and I'm going to go back to my fishing. And the other six said, well, we also feel the same way. And we're going to come back and be fishing with you.

And it says here, they went out that night and they caught nothing. What did they experience? Failure. Constant failure.

They tried from six o'clock in the evening till five o'clock next morning. And they never caught one fish. They never had a night like this in all their life.

They tried and they failed. They went to another part of the lake and lowered their nets and tried again and they failed. They moved to another part of the lake and tried again and they failed.

Can you imagine the frustration? They try here, they try there, they try every single part of the lake in those ten, eleven hours. And they haven't caught a single fish. That was the last miracle that Jesus ever did.

And he was teaching them a lesson. And when they finally, I can imagine how it must have been in their life as time went on. They started at six in the evening, let's say.

By nine or ten o'clock they said, well, it's been a pretty bad day. But we're not going to give up, we're going to try. We're going to try.

Midnight, tempted to get discouraged. By the time it was four o'clock in the morning, they had almost given up hope. This is no hope for us ever getting.

You know, just like some of us when we are trying for victory, we're trying to live a holy life and we're failing so many times, particularly in one area perhaps. And then we almost give up hope and say it's not going to work for us. That's how they were at four o'clock in the morning.

They said, okay, let's give it one more try. And by five o'clock they said, it's hopeless. There is no possibility, we're going back home.

And that's the time Jesus appeared. It says here, Jesus stood on the beach, verse four, and said, have you got any fish? And they said no. I've noticed this throughout the Gospels, that before Jesus does a miracle for anybody, He always makes that man confess his need.

A blind man will come and say, Lord, I'm blind. I want you to open my eyes. One of the things that the Lord wants us to do is to confess our failure.

Have you got any fish? He knew they had no fish. But He wanted them to say it. You know, it's so difficult for us to say it.

Yes, Lord, I failed. I failed for the hundredth time in the same area. I'm trying, I'm trying, and I failed.

And the Lord says, have you got victory? Say, no, Lord. I want it, but I haven't got it. And I've tried and tried and tried and tried and tried and tried and tried.

There are other people who say they seem to have got it. I haven't got it. Are you like that? Well, this is the Lord's word to you in John chapter 21.

What is He trying to teach you through your failure? I believe basically two things. I remember the days when I first heard the message in Romans 6, verse 14, that sin cannot rule over me. And many sins were ruling over me, even though I was born again and baptized and all that.

And I said, Lord, the Bible says sin cannot rule over me, but I'm being defeated. And I believe that sin will not rule over me. I believe a time in my life will come in my life when sin will not rule over me in any area of my life.

And I kept on confessing it, crying out to God during the day and at night, Lord, give me victory, give me victory. And the Lord did it. And that's exactly what we see here.

Confessing our sin, Lord, I have failed. I have not got the victory which I want. There's one thing the Lord hates, it's pretense.

To pretend. A lot of Christians come to church and pretend that they're living holy lives. God hates it.

There's no need to pretend. There's no need to pretend that you've got fish in your boat when you've got nothing. Just be honest and say, I've got nothing, Lord.

I don't want to pretend. I don't want a bit of pretense in my life. I am empty.

I'm defeated. But Lord, help me. And as soon as they admitted their need and confessed their failure, Jesus said, cast the net on the right side and the boat was filled with fish.

And you must believe that a time like that will come in your life. Don't ever give up hope that just like Jesus appeared on the shore and met their need, He will meet your need. He will not allow you to go on like that empty forever.

He's got a time. He's got a timetable. And if you don't give up, say, Lord, I believe you're going to do it in my life.

The time will come and He'll do it. So what is He trying to teach us through our failure? I know what He taught me through this failure. Through the failures I had numerous failures in my life.

One was that I cannot live this overcoming life with my own determination and my own strength, no matter how hard I try. I need God's grace and strength to help me. I need the power of His Holy Spirit.

I cannot do it on my own. That's the first lesson. Because, you know, I'll tell you, if we ask God for victory over sin and we get victory immediately, what would happen is we would become so proud of our victory.

And if anger is a hundred foot pit and God lifts me out of it and I fall into a thousand foot pit called pride, is that victory? No. God's got to take me out of this pit and prevent me from being proud of my victory over my anger. In any area where God blesses us, the most difficult thing God finds is to keep us humble.

I believe that's the most difficult thing for God, to keep a man humble. It was easy for Him to create the universe. He could just speak a word and create the universe.

But when God blesses a man and He's gifted for that man to remain humble, it's so difficult. He gets puffed up so quickly and then the Bible says, God resists the proud and God has to become His enemy. Now God doesn't want to become anybody's enemy, but He finds it very difficult to bless a person and to keep him humble.

And one of the ways He accomplishes that, this tremendous miracle of blessing a person mightily, gifting him with so many gifts and still keeping him humble, one way He does that is by allowing that person to have numerous failures in his life earlier on. That's one purpose with which He allows us to fail. One of His purposes.

We fail and fail. And finally when God gives us victory, we can't boast about it at all. We can't glory as though we did this.

We accomplished this in our own ability. There are many times when Peter must have brought home a big catch of fish. He must have been proud of it.

But this was one day he couldn't be proud because he tried all night and he got nothing. And that day when he brought home all these big fish, he was a humble man. And that's the number one reason why God allows us to fail so many times.

To knock out pride from our life completely. And we don't realize what an evil pride is. You know the world talks about murder and adultery and theft as great sins.

But do you know in God's eyes, those are not the greatest sins. Do you know that in God's eyes, murder and adultery and theft, though they are bad, they are not on the top of the list. Do you know what's on top of God's list of sins? Pride.

Hypocrisy. Pretending to be spiritual when you are not. These are some of the sins which are on the top of God's list.

And so pride is a terrible evil. If we can see pride like AIDS or some terrible disease like that, we learn to hate it much more. And this is the most difficult thing God finds.

To bring a person to a place of victory and blessing and to keep them humble. So that's one reason why He allows us to fail and fail and fail. That's what I found in my life.

That when God finally gave me victory, I couldn't be proud of it. I could not be proud because I know it was not my own ability. And I see even today, if God removes His grace from me, I fall tomorrow.

That's it. It's like that man I heard, that godly man who saw a drunkard walking down the road, staggering down the road. And instead of despising him, he looked at him and said, There go I, but for the grace of God.

How did he come to that place? That he had victory, but he could not despise another person who was defeated. And that's the second thing that God accomplishes when we have failed so much. One, He keeps us from being proud.

And the other thing, He keeps us from looking down on other people who are failing in the same area where we got victory. Now think of some area where you got victory. You've given up some bad habit.

And you look and you see somebody else tomorrow who's enslaved to that habit. Do you look down on him? Do you despise him? That's no victory. If you despise somebody who comes to this church, who's defeated in some area where you got victory.

Well, your victory is not such a great victory at all. What's the use of a victory that makes you despise other people and look down on other people? And that's the reason why God allows us to fail and fail and fail and fail and fail. And fail till our condition is absolutely hopeless.

And then He comes and does a miracle for us. Then we can never again look down on other people who fail in some area. Why is it we find in so many churches, believers who criticize someone else.

You know, you can look at someone and say, Look at the way he's bringing up his children. And what you're indirectly saying is, Look at the good way I brought up my children. See, that's what I mean by pride.

You despise somebody and that poor father and mother may be struggling with those children. And instead of helping them, you just criticize them. If it's gone well with your family, my brother, sister, if your children are following the Lord.

Don't ever think that's because you're such wonderful parents. It's the grace of God, that's all. It's the grace and the mercy of God that's enabled your children to follow Jesus.

But there are lots of parents I have seen in my life who are proud. They don't speak about it openly, but secretly they congratulate themselves. As they look at their children and say, Boy, what good children I have brought up.

And when God sees that, he resists them and he brings confusion into their home. To show them that it was not their cleverness or their goodness. But God's grace and mercy.

It's very good for all of us to keep our mouth in the dust at all times. To recognize that we're nothing. Everything we are and we have is by the grace of God.

So when God allows some problem to come into your life, Just go and ask yourself, Have you been proud of something that you shouldn't have been proud of? Were you proud of something where God gave you grace? And that made you look down upon other people? That's why he's allowed you to fall again, to have some confusion. Because God doesn't despise anybody as we saw yesterday. He doesn't look down on anyone.

And he wants to make us like him. And when you become like Jesus, You'll never, ever, ever, ever be proud of anything in your life. And you'll never, never, ever, ever, ever look down on a single other human being.

You can see the person lying in the gutter and you won't despise him. You'll say, well that's me, but for the grace of God, I'd be there. I'm no better than him.

I remember once in Bangalore, Somebody asked me to go and pray for an old lady who had never accepted the Lord, Who was dying of cancer. I didn't know who she was, but they called me to go and speak to her. And when I spoke to her, I said, Do you know that you're a sinner? Do you know that in God's eyes, There's no difference between you and the worst harlot or prostitute in Bangalore.

And she was horrified that I classified her with the worst prostitute in Bangalore. She said, oh no, I'm a good person. I said, Jesus didn't come for good people, he came for sinners.

And unless you're willing to take your place as a sinner, There's no hope for you. But she could not take it. She was this self-righteous person, thinking that she's so holy.

So I had to just leave her. There was no gospel I could give her, because the gospel is for sinners. So, I find that this is a very big problem with many people.

When God blesses them, they become proud. God blesses, they may go through financial difficulty, And then they become rich, and they become proud. It goes well with their children, and they become proud.

It's so easy for us to become proud, that God has to allow failure to humble us, So that he can give us his grace. He doesn't want to be our enemy. And that's why he allows us to fail, so that we can be broken.

I believe the most valuable brother or sister in any church, Is not the one who is most gifted. But the one who is most broken. A lot of people are gifted.

And they think that they can serve God, because they are gifted. You can be gifted as a preacher, or a leader, or anything. You may have a gift.

Now a gift is good, but a gift is useful. It can bless the church only when it's broken. Otherwise, you can't bless the church.

I often think of that story of that woman, Who brought this alabaster bottle full of perfume to pour at Jesus' feet. And that perfume was all locked up inside the bottle. And not a single person could get a smell of that

perfume.

You know, that's how it is with a lot of believers. Christ is in their heart. But they are not a blessing to other people.

It's like the perfume in the bottle. But it says here in God's word, that she broke that perfume at Jesus' feet. And the whole house was filled with the odor of that perfume.

But when did everyone get that smell of the perfume? When the bottle was broken. And that's what I mean, you know. Christ can live in a person's heart.

But until God allows circumstances to break that man's pride and self-confidence. And shatter him. And make him a humble man.

The perfume is not going to bless the house. So that's why God allows many, many things in our life. When I look back over my life, I think of many, many situations God has permitted in my life to humble me and break me.

In secret, a lot of people don't know about it. And there's no need for them to know about it. But God allows various things to humble us, to break us.

So that the perfume within can flow out and bless many, many people. So when the Bible says that when God allows certain things to happen into your life, don't try and justify yourself. Don't try and prove that you're right.

Humble yourself under God's mighty hand. There's a lovely verse in 1 Peter, chapter 5. It says, 1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 6. First of all, verse 5. Clothe yourself with humility toward one another. For God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

This is a law. You know, however much God may love you, if you're proud, God will have to be your enemy. That's a law.

He opposes proud people. And He gives grace only to humble people. He opposes the proud, and He gives grace to the humble.

And since that is the case, it says in verse 6, Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time. Now what does that mean? That means when God allows certain circumstances to come into your life, into your home, don't fight against them. Don't justify yourself.

Don't say, Lord, I'm right. Humble yourself and acknowledge the possibility that you may be wrong. Part of the pride is in the fact that you think you're right.

You may be wrong. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. God allows things in our life to humble us.

And when those things come into our life or in our home, we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. What is the mighty hand of God? The mighty hand of God is those circumstances God is using right now to humble you in your life. He's allowed people to trouble you, perhaps, or the Apostle Paul says he got a thorn in the flesh, some sickness.

You know, God can even use sickness to humble a person, because a man is so proud. It's an amazing thing that Paul recognized that. He says, God blessed me so much, he says in 2 Corinthians 12, that I was in danger of becoming puffed up.

The wonderful thing about Paul was that he recognized that. A lot of Christians don't recognize that when God has blessed them so much, they are in danger of becoming proud. Paul recognized it and Paul recognized the reason why God allowed that confusion, that sickness to come into his life was to humble him, so that he could give him grace.

God doesn't give sickness. Sickness is always from the devil. But sometimes God allows it in order to humble us.

And Paul recognized it and he says, when I recognized it, I prayed three times that God would take away that sickness and God didn't take it away. I said, okay then. God said, my grace is enough for you.

And he says, then I rejoice in it. This is the means by which God is going to humble me, so that I can get grace, because God gives His grace totally to the humble. You see, you know, grace is like water.

Water always runs to the lowest place first. And the lower you are, the sooner God's grace can come to you. And that's how it is.

If you humble yourself, you'll find grace flowing down to you very quickly. Why is it that we don't get much grace? We are there exalting ourselves in different circumstances and then we don't get grace. So the Bible says, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

Don't blame your wife and don't blame your neighbors and don't blame the people in the office for the circumstances in your life. Say, Lord, this is You. You have allowed this in my life, in my home, to humble me.

And I'm going to humble myself. I'm not going to blame anybody else. I'm going to humble myself here and I believe that You will give me grace.

God never, never refuses to give grace to the humble. And when we get grace, you know what happens? The Bible says in Romans 6, verse 14, that when we are under grace, no sin can rule over us. I want you to think of that for a moment.

No sin can rule over you. No filthy habit can enslave you if you are under grace. Why do you get defeated by sin? Because you are not under grace.

Why is it you can't overcome that filthy habit? Because you haven't received grace. That's the first thing we need to understand. Secondly, why didn't I get grace? What's the answer? We didn't humble ourselves.

We were proud. God does not give grace to the proud. So you see, through the years, whenever I've fallen into sin, even a small one, I have never asked God, Lord, why didn't You give me grace to overcome that sin? Because I know the reason.

Why do I have to ask God? If I had got grace, I would not have fallen into sin in that area. In my thoughts, or in my words, or in my deeds, I would not have fallen. I fell because I did not receive grace at that time.

And I don't have to ask God why I fell. I know why I fell. I didn't get grace.

And I know why I didn't get grace, because in some area, I must have been proud of something. Maybe of some gift that I had, or some blessing that God gave me, or some way in which God exalted me, I was proud of it. So what I do is, I go to God and say, Lord, show me, where was I proud? Let me deal with that, so that I can humble myself once again and get grace, and be an overcomer.

If you follow that rule, you will find God will help you. Whenever you fall into sin, remember there is only one reason. I want to repeat it again.

When you fall into sin, there is only one reason. You did not get grace from God in that situation. And you did not get grace from God because you were proud.

So all you need to do is, go to God and ask Him, Lord, where was I proud? Just show me the place where I was proud, the area, the matter, about which I was proud. And I am going to humble myself. I am going to give you the glory.

I am not, maybe some area where I should have given God the glory for what He did. I took the glory to myself. You know, that is so easy.

Like I said, if God blesses our children in some way, we can take the glory to ourselves, and we do not even realize it. It is so subtly done. Or God blesses something we do.

God blesses the work of our hands. And we take the glory to ourselves as though we are such clever, smart people. And that is why we did that.

We are not. It is God's grace. It is God's mercy.

Everything we have received from God. I do not know whether you have noticed this verse in 1 Corinthians 4. It is a lovely verse. 1 Corinthians 4. And verse 7. It says here in 1 Corinthians 4.7, And I encourage you to remember some of these verses.

Write them down or underline them and look them up later. This is a lovely verse. Who considers you as superior? Why do you think you are superior to others? What have you got that you did not receive? Just answer that question.

What have you got today that you did not receive from God? Sometimes we see children that are born retarded. With their brains not developed. And they are incapable of doing anything in life.

They can't go to school. They can't take care of themselves. Do you know that you could have been born like that? You could have been born with just a slight damage in your brain.

And you wouldn't be the smart person you are today. You wouldn't have been able to go to work. You wouldn't have been able to take care of yourself.

You wouldn't have been able to do anything. What have you got that you did not receive? And if you received it, it says in the same verse, if you received it from God, why do you boast as if you produced it yourself? As if it was your own smartness and ability? No wonder grace departs from your life. Grace can never depart from the life of a man or a woman who keeps his mouth in the dust and says, Lord, I am nothing.

Everything I have, You have given me freely. And I want to ask all of you who are sitting here, do you look down on anyone? Do you look down on anyone else in your church? Do you look down on any other believer in some other church? I think even about the understanding that I have of truth. God's, by His grace, given me some understanding of truth that saved me from so much of deception there is in Christendom today.

But even that understanding, it's God's grace. I can't boast that I am a better person than others. That's why God did that.

It's God's mercy. We cannot glory in anything we have received. We cannot look down on a single other person.

I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, please take this seriously. Perhaps the reason why you are not getting more grace from God is because you are looking down on certain people. You think of yourself as a little smarter or clever or more spiritual and look down on someone.

That's the reason. God can't give you grace. I want to encourage you from today onwards, no matter what your gift is, no matter what God has done for you, no matter whatever way God has blessed you, keep your mouth in the dust and say, Lord, I am nothing.

Everything I receive is your grace. If it's gone well with my children, that's your grace. If you've given me some gift, that's your grace.

What have you got that you didn't receive? And if you received it, how can you ever boast as if you hadn't received it? How can you compare yourself with somebody else and glory that you are better or more capable or more powerful than him? Keep your head bowed before God and say, Lord, that is your grace. Yesterday I was saying how even Jesus was just like us. He lived on earth just like us.

He was tempted like us. The Bible says that very clearly. You must remember that verse I quoted yesterday in Hebrews 4.15. If you don't know it, please remember this verse.

It's a very lovely verse that we have a high priest who can sympathize with us because he was tempted in all points exactly like us and he did not sin. And if he was tempted like us, I want to ask you a question. Do you think Jesus was tempted to be proud when the Father blessed Him in some way or used Him to heal the sick? You know, we can't even think of that possibility.

We think He wasn't tempted. The Bible says He was tempted, but He didn't sin. He didn't ever become proud even though God used Him to do fantastic miracles.

You know how easy it is for us to fall in pride? You go and pray for somebody who is sick and the next day you hear that he was healed. How do you feel? Oh, I prayed and he was healed. And that's just one little thing.

I want to show you a lovely verse in Luke's Gospel, chapter 5. Jesus was tempted like us. Luke chapter 5, verse 15. It says here that the news about Jesus was spreading even further and great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

Everywhere Jesus went, great crowds came. Can you imagine what would happen to you if great crowds came to listen to you and you were healing them of their sicknesses? You'd be tempted to tremendous

pride. So what did Jesus do? See the next verse.

He would often slip away into the wilderness to pray. Why did He need to pray? He said, Father, I don't want to touch that glory. That's Yours.

I would recommend that you do the same thing. When God blesses you in some way or uses you in some way, slip away somewhere and get alone with God and say, God, I give you that glory. When something good happens in your family, get alone with God and give Him that glory.

And that's why Jesus never for a single moment became proud because He had that habit that when the Father blessed Him in some way, He'd get alone with the Father and say, Father, that's Yours. That glory is Yours. He who is the sinless Son of God had to live like that.

It says He would often, not once in a while, He'd often slip away into the wilderness and pray. We don't need to spend long hours in prayer, but you know, you find that God has blessed you tremendously. You know, we normally go to God in prayer when we have trials and problems.

We don't think so much of going to God in prayer when we are blessed. But that's the time we probably need to go because when we are blessed, we are in danger of being puffed up and proud that something good has happened to me and that's the time we probably need to go, just like Jesus did. See, Jesus didn't go to pray because He had a problem.

No. He was going to pray here because He got so blessed. Father, I've been so blessed in my ministry.

I've got to get along with You and give You all that glory so that I don't touch it. And that's how we are to live on this earth every day. The devil knocks down more people through pride than perhaps through any other sin.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, for God gives His grace to the humble. And that's one reason why God allows us to fail so often, to humble us. What was the result of Peter failing so many times? A few days later, on the day of Pentecost, God could use him to preach the gospel for the first time in the history of the world.

To preach the gospel on the day of Pentecost. And 3,000 people got converted. And 3,000 people got filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, can you imagine what would happen to you if you went somewhere and preached the gospel and 3,000 people got converted? And 3,000 people got filled with the Spirit after listening to one sermon of yours? I don't think your head would remain the same size. It would become really big. And don't you think Peter was like us? Why is it that he didn't get so puffed up on the day of Pentecost? Shall I tell you? Because he knew what a terrible failure he had been just six weeks earlier.

He had denied the Lord so badly, three times, that if somebody had come to him after the day of Pentecost with his tremendous revival and 3,000 people getting saved and baptized, and said, boy, Peter, you're a great man of God. He would have said, you don't know me. What a failure I was six weeks ago.

So that failure prepared Peter to face this tremendous blessing on the day of Pentecost and not become proud. Because he knew what a failure he had been. And do you know what Peter writes in one of his letters? I want you to see this.

In 2 Peter. He's saying this from his own experience. 2 Peter 1. And verse 9. He who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

What Peter is saying is, if you ever forget what God has forgiven you from, you'll become blind. You know how people become spiritually blind? Because they have forgotten what all wretched sins God saved them from. Peter says, don't ever forget in all your life, don't ever forget the pit that God saved you from.

The sins that God saved you from. Otherwise you'll become blind. You'll look down on people who are sinning today.

And you'll become proud. And you'll lose God's grace. So God has great wisdom.

And in His wisdom, He did not pray that Peter should not fall. What did He pray? Let Peter fall. But when he falls, let him not lose his faith.

Let him remember that God loves him still. Do you know what faith is? Lot of people think faith is some mystical thing. Faith is just to believe that God loves me still.

Can you believe that God loves you just as you are? Even though you failed so many times, that's faith. Lord, even though I failed, even though I let you down, I know you still love me. You know the story of the prodigal son when he was in the far country.

Why did he come back to his father's house? Because he knew one thing, that his father still loved him. Okay, I made a mess of my life. I wasted all my father's property.

But one thing I know, he still loves me. And I believe that's how we should be towards one another. In that house, the prodigal son's house, there was another son, an elder brother.

He was so different. And you know if that father had died and the elder brother was in charge of that house, that prodigal son would never have come back. Because he knew what his elder brother was like.

And I have often thought, you know, so many people don't feel like coming to us because they see in us the attitude of an elder brother. Where we look down on the person who has failed, who has made a mess of his life. But Jesus said the father was not like that.

He ran and welcomed that boy and when that boy began to say, Dad, I have sinned so much. He said, Oh, never mind son, it's okay. Come and sit at my right hand.

That is how God wants to make all of us in our attitude towards people in the world who are defeated, who have failed. Say, don't worry, God still loves you. And if we can be like that, I believe we can build a church that will satisfy the heart of Jesus.

A church where we believe that God loves us and a church where we love one another just like God loves us just as we are. And God accepts us as we are. And then He is going to change us.

He doesn't wait for you to change and then accept you. And I must not wait for a person to change before I accept him. Because that is not how God is.

The Bible says, Receive one another just like Christ received you. How did Christ receive me? He received me just as I was. Before I changed.

And I've got to receive other people just as they are before they change. And believe that God will change them. Let's pray.

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