

What Brokenness Means

by Zac Poonen

True spiritual growth can only be achieved through heart transformation, not through external activities or self-righteousness.

Duration: 36:12

Scripture: Luke 15:3, Galatians 6:3

Topics: "Repentance", "Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the danger of legalism in churches and individuals, highlighting the need for brokenness, repentance, and humility. It explores the journey from self-righteousness to becoming a 'nobody' before God, drawing lessons from the story of Job and the importance of continuous repentance and self-judgment. The focus is on being poor in spirit, constantly aware of personal need and avoiding self-justification, jealousy, and demands on others.

Transcript

I believe that one of the biggest problems many of us face, our elders and many of our churches is the problem of legalism, of going by the letter of the law and imagining that therefore you are spiritual because you do certain religious activities and not realizing that those are only leaves. All religious activity is leaves. Bible reading, praying, going to meetings, all these things are leaves.

And the fruit may not be there and Jesus comes looking for fruit. The Galatians had this problem. They started well.

They were born again and in the spirit. But they got off onto a sidetrack into legalism thinking that that would take them where God had destined for them. You see, the destination as we've seen is not heaven but becoming like Christ.

And legalism will never take you there. And one of the words that Paul spoke to them to correct this, and this is a word which all of us who tend to be legalistic should take heed to. Galatians 6 verse 3, if anyone thinks that he is a somebody when he is a nobody, he deceives himself.

That was just for emphasis. If anybody thinks he's a somebody when he's a nobody, he deceives himself. The mark of a legalist is he thinks he's a somebody.

And he thinks he's more than all these others who are nobodies. When you look at others and think they are nobodies, you're a legalist. And when you think you're a somebody, you're a legalist.

A truly spiritual man, really deep down himself, considers himself a nobody. Paul was like that. He once said in 1 Corinthians 3, who is Paul? Who is Apollos? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

He who plants is a nobody. He's referring to himself, 1 Corinthians 3. He who waters is a nobody. But God is everything.

How do you know that you love God with all your heart? When we are born into this world, you see that in every child. Their heart is full of love for themselves. They love themselves.

And there are psychologists who teach today, you must learn to love yourself. But you don't need to learn it. Adam has taught all of us that long ago.

But there are Christians, preachers, thoroughly deceived by these psychologists because they study psychology more than the Bible, who say, you cannot love your neighbor as yourself if you don't first love yourself. As if we have a problem loving ourselves. Anybody here who had a problem loving yourself? Don't fool yourself.

We already love ourselves. Jesus said we've got to hate ourselves because only if I hate myself, I'll be able to love God and love my neighbor as myself. We already love ourselves.

When a heart is full of love for self, and Jesus wants to bring us to the place where we love God with all of our heart, something has to be eliminated. I have to become a nobody. Then my heart will be full of love for the Lord.

And that's why God has to break us like we heard just now. God has to break us, bring us down to zero. You know, in schools, a useless student who starts at zero, they try to work him up to 100%.

That's good for earthly things. But in spiritual things, we start with 100% and God is trying to work us down to zero. I want to know how far you've come.

I want to know how far I've come. How far has God succeeded in bringing you who are 100% full of yourself down to zero? Has he come 50% at least? 75%? When you get down to zero, God can really let the flood of living waters go out through you. Brokenness is the most important thing.

Brokenness means God has to reduce us to zero. These Galatians who really thought they were somebody because they were following little, little rules and regulations. You know, I've seen that with legalists.

Every legalist thinks he's somebody. I mean, he may be obeying some scripture. For example, there are scriptures against women wearing jewelry.

So, here's a sister who takes off her jewelry and she really thinks she's somebody because she's taken off jewelry. But then she also looks down on others who wear jewelry saying they're nobodies. Now, I'm never wearing jewelry.

My wife and I have never worn jewelry in all our life because we respect scripture. But that does not make us somebody. That's the point.

And it doesn't make somebody else who wears jewelry nobody because it's a matter of the heart. And we're not here to judge one another. That's just one area.

A sister who wears skirts can look down on another sister who wears pants. I'm a somebody. There are a thousand and one areas where we look down on others and in areas which are not seen.

And that's the mark of a legalist. I was telling the elders yesterday some time ago one of my sons decided to grow his hair long. Well, I wanted to see a scripture if I could tell him because, you know, we've always believed that women should have long hair and men should have short hair.

So, I searched the scriptures and what I found in 1 Corinthians 11 was that nature says your hair should be short. What does God say? I don't know. So, I couldn't tell my son nature says your hair should be short because what does it matter? Nature is like tradition.

And I realized when I studied scripture that I had formed an opinion which was not what God had said but it says nature says your hair should be. So, I realized that I had had a wrong opinion all my life about this because of tradition. So, I decided not to tell him anything because if I can't point out saying that is sin according to this because God has said it, how can I say that? I can't tell him my opinion.

And if Jesus had long hair, I'd tell him that too then or John Wesley or others. So, once I got over that, I said, yeah, well, I've got nothing to say there. Then I could tell him, well, it doesn't bother me anymore that you have long hair because I studied the scripture on it.

And I removed the wrong idea I had by careless reading of scripture. But I said, why do you have long hair? I mean, just out of curiosity. And he said, well, Dad, I made a vow before God.

And every time I see that, I remind myself of that vow. And one day when it's fulfilled, I'll cut it off. I said, fine, it will be you and God.

I'm not going to interfere in that. And so, when a few months ago he cut it off, I said, yeah, that's within him and God. Just as an example, many of us drive away our children by pointing out to them something which you cannot find in scripture as a sin.

It is an opinion you have. I'm just using that as an example. It could be some other area in your life.

Parents must have a very close relationship with their children. In the last days, the Bible says God is going to send the spirit of Elijah who will bring the hearts of the fathers towards the children and the hearts of the children towards the fathers. We are living in those days where children are becoming more and more distant from their parents.

We stand against sin, of course, but make sure you're standing against sin and not against some tradition that you have got without any foundation in scripture because that is what you have inherited. Jesus fought against tradition as much as he fought against sin. Today's Christians, legalists do not fight against tradition and they don't even fight against sin and because they think they are somebody.

So what we heard is so important. See, one mark of one who is a nobody is that he's not making demands on others. You must wear skirts like me.

Some sister says you must not have jewelry like me or you must have short hair like me. Some brother says these are all demands. This brother who just spoke to you, Brother Eckholt, my son Sanjay and his wife, when before they were engaged in Norway and they went up to Brother Eckholt, I think it was just before they got married or just after, I don't remember, and asked him a question.

They said, how is it you've been so happily married for 50 years with your wife? And Brother Eckholt gave a reply which they have not forgotten, which I haven't forgotten. He said, it's because we decided never to make any demands on each other. That's a secret.

I don't make any demands on you because very often my demands come out of my prejudices, my opinions, which may not be in Scripture. You ask yourself, do you have a demand on someone that they should be like you, have your convictions on things which are not in Scripture? This is legalism. A broken man has no demands.

I mean, I can believe that what Brother Eckholt said was true. When you don't have demands on each other, you don't have fights. If you have a demand, you must respect me.

That's a demand. The food you cook must be good. That's a demand.

And one day the food is not good, you get upset. Why do you get upset? Because you have a demand. You are not a zero.

God has not succeeded in bringing you down to zero. Perhaps God allowed your wife to burn the food one day and add so much salt to help you to come down to zero, but God didn't succeed because you fought against it. Or maybe one day your husband said he would come home for dinner at seven and came at 11 o'clock at night because something urgent happened just to break you, sister, and you got all upset when he came back.

God didn't succeed in bringing you down to zero. Do you know how much God is trying, trying, trying to bring us to zero, but we are fighting against it because we have demands. We have demands on each other in the church.

You heard about brothers who have problems with each other. Do you think I went and told brother Eckholt about that? No. He had a word from the Lord.

Why don't you listen to it? Why do you have a problem with someone? Because you have a demand that he must understand you. What a deception that is. Who said he must understand you? You know, there was this prayer of, I had it somewhere here, yeah, the prayer of Francis of Assisi.

Some of you may wonder who he is. He's a Roman Catholic saint who lived 1100 AD. He said, Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Wherever I find hatred, let me sow some love. Where I find injury, someone feels injured, let me sow pardon. And where I find doubt, let me sow faith.

And where there is darkness, let me sow light. And where there is despair and hopelessness, let me sow some hope. And where there is sadness, let me go around sowing some joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not seek to be consoled by others as much as to console others. Let me seek not to be understood by others as much as to understand others. Let me not seek to be loved by

others as much as to love them.

For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Like Jesus told the Jews, they will come from the East and the West and the Gentiles will be sitting in God's kingdom. I say to today's Protestants and Pentecostals and Charismatics and CFC folk, the Roman Catholics will be sitting in God's kingdom ahead of us, some men like this. They knew God.

Their doctrine was wrong. Their head was wrong. Their heart was right.

With many of us, our head is right, but our heart is wrong because we can't get along with somebody. We want to be understood more than to understand. To understand why is it he has a problem with me? Whereas if I'm somebody, my question is, why in the world can't he understand me, my position? That is the mark of a somebody.

And nobody says, maybe I'm troubling him in some way. Help me to know it, Lord. I don't have a demand that he should understand me.

You know, we think we are spiritual when we are not broken. Why do I say these things? Because we are really approaching the end times. Christ is coming soon.

There is no time to allow the devil to deceive us anymore. We must have our eyes wide open and see areas where the devil has robbed us of our inheritance in Christ. My dear brothers and sisters, don't think you love God if you are not broken.

Don't think you love God if you seek to be understood more than to understand. No, you don't. Don't think you're spiritual just because of these externals if you don't have compassion to understand somebody else.

See, when we are not broken, we're always justifying ourselves. Somebody comes to correct you or point out something, and you've got an answer. No, no, no, brother, this is the thing.

You know what Jesus said about those who justify themselves? It's the habit of Adam. Jesus said in Luke 16 and verse 15, to the Pharisees, I want you to listen to this, Luke 16, 15. You, to the Pharisees who were scoffing at Jesus, verse 14, he said, you are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men.

I want to ask you in Jesus' name this morning, is there any one of us, you or me, whom Jesus would look straight in the eye and say, you try to justify yourselves in the sight of others when you are corrected? When somebody points out something in you, even an older brother points out something in you, you try to justify yourself. And that self-justification, read the rest of the verse, may impress men, but it is an abomination in the sight of God. It is an abomination in the sight of God.

Do you know that self-justification is an abomination in the sight of God? I looked up the word abomination in the Old Testament, particularly I think in the King James Version. It's very interesting to find out where abomination comes. Shall I tell you? In the Old Testament, in the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord told the Israelites, when you're out in the wilderness, there are no toilets there.

You must go outside the camp and take a spade and dig a hole. And when you're finished doing what you want to do, answering the calls of nature, cover it up with a spade. Otherwise, it's an abomination to God.

Got it? What is your justifying yourself? Like a toilet that's not flushed in modern language. Please don't show somebody an unflushed toilet in future. Somebody corrects you, consider you could be 100% wrong, not 99%.

But when you try to prove that you're 100% right, it's like an unflushed toilet, and you're stuffing more into that toilet. And every time you justify yourself, there's more in that muck in that toilet. Somebody asked me once, Brother Zach, why do you keep using this word garbage and rubbish? I said, I didn't use it first.

Paul used it first in Philippians. This is all rubbish, he said. But do you know the word there? The word in the original is what is in that unflushed toilet.

Be thankful that I don't not using that word. That's the original meaning. That's what I mean by rubbish.

That's what Paul means by rubbish. That's the rubbish he's talking about. He takes the most stinking, repulsive thing that you can think of, and he says everything outside of Christ is rubbish.

That's what it is. When you see everything outside of Christ as rubbish, including the honor of men, you will never seek for it. And you will never seek to justify yourself before anyone.

When you're a broken person, you do not seek to justify yourself before anybody because you see it for the unflushed toilet that it is, which you're presenting to somebody. Oh, I want to hate it. If it's an abomination before God, Jesus said, it is an abomination before God.

It is detestable. The King James Version is better sometimes, an abomination in the sight of God. What? Just this justifying yourself in the sight of men.

Yeah, that's the mark. It's an unwillingness to receive. It's because it's an indication of a man who is unwilling to judge himself because he thinks he's right.

And he's jealous of others. You find that such people become jealous of others very quickly. Jealous if they are not given prominence.

You find that brother, sister, that you're jealous when you're not given some prominence. It's because you're justifying yourself and God has not given you grace. Your face is not in the dust.

Who is the one who is disturbed when he's not given prominence in the church? The one who thinks he's a somebody. Uh-huh. That person is given prominence, but not me.

I'm also somebody here. Do you feel like that? Do you feel like that if some brothers are invited to share the word and you're not invited to share the word? It's an unflushed toilet. What is the exhortation to you? Flush the toilet, brother.

Flush it. Flush it out. Don't leave it like that and keep on accumulating in every conference more and more stink.

Do you think you're very important? That's the main reason why the anointing departs and you don't even realize it's departed. And others can see it, but you can't see it yourself. When Jesus began the Sermon on the these words, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the whole kingdom of heaven.

He came to earth to give us the kingdom of heaven and he told us there's only one type of person that can get it. The one who is poor in spirit. What is the most important requirement for fellowship? If I were to ask you, for fellowship between two brothers, what is the most important requirement? We'd say walking in the light.

But you know, one brother can say, but he's not walking in the light. That's the problem. I'm walking in the light, he isn't.

What do you do then? Okay, then we move on to something else, say love. And this brother will say, well, I've got love, he doesn't have love. What do you do then? Or you say humility.

And this brother says, I'm humble, all right, but he's not humble. Where do you go from here? Holiness. I'm holy, he's not holy.

And that broken fellowship remains. But when it comes to being poor in spirit, a man says I'm poor in spirit, but he's not. That proves he's not poor in spirit.

Because a man who is poor in spirit is aware of his own need. That is the mark of a man who is poor in spirit. He is not aware of the need of others.

He's aware of his own need. Lord, I'm a needy person. His face is in the dust.

If you read the book of Job, you have a classic example of this teaching. Job and his three preacher friends, they're saying this is why God is punishing you. This is why you're sick.

This is why your children died. They must have committed some secret sin. And every time Job saying no, no, no, it's not like that.

You don't know I've done this. I've cared for the widows. I've not made money.

My God, I don't even lust after women. And so many, each is back. It reminds me of some brothers, some husband and wife trying to get them together.

This is like this. It's like the book of Job. And some brothers try to get them together.

It's like the book of Job. He's got an answer and he's got an answer and he's got an answer. And there's one young fellow called Elihu.

He was better than the others. He said some good things, but he also couldn't solve the problem to Job. And then God said, let me speak now.

All you preachers, shut up. Let me speak. And what does God say? Does God say, see how holy I am? No, no, no.

There's not one word about his holiness. He asked Job, Job, where were you when I created this universe? Where were you? Tell me, can you make an alligator your pet? These are the type of questions he asked Job. Do you know where the snow comes from? Can you produce it? Nothing about holiness, not a word about holiness and sin or any such thing.

We try to convict people about sin. And those preachers try to convict Job about his sin. No, no, no, no.

God has another way. His ways are so different from man's ways. The more you know, God, you know, God, if you read the scriptures, you'll see his ways are different.

And he says, and Job listens to all this. Not one word about Job's sin. It's all about how great God is.

And every time God speaks, Job becomes smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller. Finally, he says in chapter 40, Lord, I'm nobody. You know, that's what he said.

I am a nobody. God said, at last I have accomplished in Job what I wanted to accomplish, to bring him to be a nobody. Turn to that verse.

That is the end result of God's working in Job. God is so full of compassion. What those preachers could not succeed in.

Job finally said in Job 40 and verse 4, after he heard God speak about his greatness, I am nothing. Job 40 verse 4, I am nothing. I lay my hand on my mouth.

I've spoken once. I will not answer. I will not justify myself anymore.

When God can bring you to the place where you say, Lord, I'm nothing. I will lay my hand on my mouth. I've got no answer.

I will add nothing more. He has succeeded. Job was a perfect man in chapter one, perfect according to the light he had.

He had so many good things. He never lusted after women before the Bible was written. Don't you think he's a million times better than today's believers? He helped the poor.

He didn't make money. He's God. All these things were there, but there was one thing Job lacked.

He was proud of his righteousness. And I believe that is a problem with many of us. We have heard about victory over sin.

We have experienced some victory in our life and we have got many good qualities, but we are pretty proud about it. And the proof of it is you get offended when you don't, you're not given prominence. And you justify yourself when you're corrected.

God has to do a work in you like he did in Job. You're an excellent brother, excellent sister, like Job was in chapter one, but he was not a broken person in chapter one. By the time you come to the end of that book, he's a broken man.

And finally in chapter 42, he says, Oh Lord, verse 46, I repent in dust and ashes. He put his mouth in the dust and said, I'm a nobody. I'm living in repentance, repentance, repentance, repentance before you from now on.

And God said in verse seven, the last part, my servant Job has spoken what is right. Can the Lord say that about you? My servant, brother so-and-so, sister so-and-so has spoken what is right. What is that? I am nothing.

I'm a nobody. I will not open my mouth and justify myself anymore. I shall from henceforth live with my face in the dust and ashes and in repentance and brokenness every day.

That's what God is looking for. What should the church, what type of people should be in the church? Let me share this in closing. Luke chapter 15, Luke chapter 15 and verse three onwards to seven.

It's a well-known story, but in many of these stories, we sometimes concentrate on the wrong person. The story of the prodigal son, we need to learn about the elder son. Most sermons are on the prodigal son and we need to concentrate on the father in the story of the prodigal son.

In the story of the lost coin, we need to think of the compassion of that, that eagerness of that woman to find the coin. We need to ask ourselves why the coin was lost. The woman there is a picture of a church that is careless and loses people through its carelessness.

In this parable, the shepherd is Jesus. You see the Holy Spirit in the church. The church doesn't respond to the Holy Spirit who is careless and loses coins that God gives it.

Here, Jesus is the shepherd. And there's a lost sheep and the sheep, Jesus goes and finds that sheep and brings that sheep into the church. Okay.

How does Jesus describe the church? Read carefully. Verse seven, 99 righteous persons who need no repentance. That's the church.

You ask the Lord, Lord, what is your definition of the church? People who need righteous people who need no repentance. You say how in the world? You mean there are people in the world who know didn't don't need any repentance? Yes, because they're repenting every day. They're not only once a day, they're repenting many times a day because they're getting light on themselves.

I get light on myself many times during the day. I've got light on myself even today, not just in sermons. Most of the time I get my light when nobody is preaching.

When I'm walking down the road, when I wake up in the morning, when I'm doing something else, suddenly out of the blue I get light on something which I told you I've looked at the faces of godly, humble people and got light on myself without even their opening their mouth. And I repent immediately. I want to be a part of the church, which consists of righteous people who need no repentance because they are repenting constantly.

That's what makes you a part of the church. Not that you've understood the new covenant and you know all about the doctrines and about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and all the explanations. All that is good, brother, but it's no use if you don't have a foundation of brokenness and repentance.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. The poor in spirit are those who are always aware of their own need. And those are the people I love to hear when they speak.

There's a spirit about such people which blesses my heart. They may not say clever things and beautiful stories and all that, but I sense when I listen to people that man is a broken man. That is a man is a man who's judging himself.

There is a man who is living in constant repentance. Lord, give me such people to listen to. Give us such people in the church.

Give us such elder brothers in the church who have no desire for prominence, who do not think they are somebody. We have many righteous brothers who think they are somebody, just like Job in chapter one. I

want to invite you all to take the journey to become like Job in chapter 42.

Don't be like Job in chapter one, perfect and an upright man who turns away from evil, who fears God, and that is your opinion of yourself right now, who brought up his children properly, gathered the ten of them every day to pray with them, family prayer and all that, and not lusting after women, not worshipping gold, and all that, all the things you know, you've got it all in your mind what you are. The main thing is missing, brokenness. May the Lord take you through.

All preachers won't help you. You can have three preachers, Eliphaz, Bob, Bildad, Zophar, even Elihu. You've got to meet with God, and God has to say to you, where were you when I created the universe? Can you make an alligator like Amos? You who think you're so powerful and mighty servant of God and all that.

Can you make a little thing like snow? I stopped the sea with grains of sand. Grains of sand stopped the mighty tsunamis. Can you do that? And Job becomes smaller.

I have many times exhorted people, sit outside some night and look at the stars and see how great God is, and see what a nobody you are. I do it many times. I say, Lord, I think of this mighty universe, even if I don't see it, I think about it, this mighty universe, and here's a small speck called earth, and on this speck of earth is even a smaller speck called me, and I think I'm God's representative, that I'm such a great leader.

Put your mouth in the dust, brother. That's what God's told me. Put your mouth in the dust all the time.

I want to live there all my days. You cannot fall. When you're down on the ground, you can never fall.

That's how the Lord keeps you from falling. If you stand, you can fall. Even if you sit down, you can fall.

But how can you fall when you're flat on the ground with your mouth in the dust? He's able to keep us from falling, because your mouth is in the dust. It's impossible to fall. May God help us.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that you will apply what we have heard to our lives, that we shall walk all our days softly before you in continuous repentance, that your name will be glorified through our lives, that we'll be like Job was in chapter 42 and not like he was in chapter one. Help us each one.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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