

He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease

By Shawn Reynolds

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: John 3:30
Preached on: Sunday, October 8, 2017

Grace Particular Baptist Church
5725 Imperial Lakes Blvd
Mulberry, FL 33860

Website: www.onefoldoneshepherd.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceparticular

If you will this morning, turn with me in the word of God to our text this morning which will come from John 3:30.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Let us pray.

Dear Father in heaven, how glorious thou art. O Lord, we owe all that we have, all that we are to thee. I pray, O Lord, that thou would indeed increase in this hour, that each and every soul in this room would decrease; that you would have the preeminence today and all days; that you would be exalted in our souls in this hour by the work of thy Holy Spirit. O Lord, search us, lead us, guide us to this truth. And Lord, may it be a present reality in our lives today. Seek out that which thou hast done in our souls and reveal it to us in this hour for the glory of thee and thee alone. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

He must increase, but I must decrease. I've always been kind of mesmerized by that verse from the standpoint that there's an italicized word in it, it's the second "must." I can't say which way I prefer it. Without that word, it says, "He must increase, but I decrease," which shows me that when Christ increases in my life, simultaneously by the power of Christ, I decrease. And that "must" word is not to me to do, but it's of his doing. But with that word in there, I have no problem with it either because it is a Gospel truth that Christ in every one of his children's lives must increase and we must, must means necessity, of a great necessity, we must decrease.

I know that as I stand here today in my relationship with my wife whom I love dearly for the Lord has graciously given me as a wonderful helpmate, Christ must increase and I must decrease in my relationship with her. Christ must be her preeminence. Christ must be my preeminence. Not my will but his.

I look at my children that I love dearly in this room, I look at the young ones in the back of the room. I think of how in your life so much moves so fast when you move into those teen years and things seem to seem like there's a big weight of the world on your shoulders. What are you going to do with your life? Where are you going to go? What are you going to do? Christ must increase and you must decrease. In my relationship with my

own children as I try to guide them as they come to me for advice, as they come to me and say, "Dad, what should I do?" Christ must increase. We all have ideas of what we want for our children, what we think is right for our children, but Christ must increase and we must decrease even in their lives.

In all of our relationships, in my relationship this morning before you as a minister of God, I must decrease and he must increase. It must be all of him which you will see shortly here is what the Lord did in John's life, and that's where these words come from. John said these. John the Baptist said these, "He must increase and I must decrease."

In this world as we live every day in this world, as I live every day in this world in the vocation that the Lord calls me to do, in the places that I go and the decisions that are made, he must increase and I must decrease.

In the religion that's in my life, no matter if it's prayer, no matter if it's coming to the place of worship, no matter if it's counseling others whom I love, he must increase and I must decrease.

And I'm going to tell you something: without the faith of the Son of God, none of us will ever get there. The thing for me to stand and tell you youth in the room, is that Christ must increase in your life because I can't make that happen. I can just tell you that that is the life of the child of God. He will increase and you will decrease and that's a promise and I'm going to show you how, Lord willing, the Holy Spirit reveals this morning how all this took place in John's life.

As we begin in verse 22 this morning, up to that point, the Lord told us another "must, you must be born again." It's of a great necessity that the child of God must be born again. Without it, without that birth, you will never see or enter into the kingdom of God and you'll never see what I have to say today without being born again. That's the work of the Holy Ghost. That's why in the progression of the Holy Spirit in putting down these words, you see what being born again means and you're going to see that in John's life. And I pray this morning that as we look into these words, that the Holy Spirit searches our souls and our hearts to reveal whether this is present in us as we take inventory and look in our lives. Has Christ increased? Have my thoughts, my desires, my dreams, my will, has it decreased in my life that the Lord has brought me to his feet to say the same words of my Savior, "Nevertheless, Lord, thy will be done"? That truly is the increasing of Christ.

So we pick up in verse 22, "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there." Both of them baptizing at the same time: Christ and his disciples on one side, John over on the other side.

"And they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison." Notice that. John's life had not come to an end. You say, "Well, that's obvious." People believe that in this life we decrease when we leave this life. No, the child of God decreases in this life by

the work of Christ. He decreases and the Lord shows him the preeminence of Christ and when the preeminence of Christ is reigning on his throne in your life, you will decrease.

"A John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying." The question is about baptism. They're wondering why Christ is over here baptizing and John, you're still baptizing. Why is that? Why at the same time both of these are going on?

"And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi," or teacher, "he that was with thee beyond Jordan," whom you baptized in Jordan, "to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." There is this phenomenon happening. The people in your life where you were sent and you were prophesied to come as the forerunner to Christ and all of these droves of people came to you, they're not coming as much anymore, and all of them are coming to this other one over here. Why is that? Have you lost your power? This is the way man rationalizes things. "Well, something's wrong here if they're coming to Christ and they're coming to you. Set us straight." And John does. He says,

"John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." And I hope all of you understand in this room that all that we have out of the storehouse of Christ must be given by Christ: love, faith, patience, longsuffering, trust, faith. All the things that are of a necessity in this life to live in the life of Christ are given from Christ.

John said, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ." And John, that was his ministry. "I am not the Christ." He kept pointing to the one. John even said it, "I'm not worthy to even do the shoe on my Lord's foot." And I hope in this room, the Lord comes with power and shows you today you aren't either. Our worthiness is in Christ. Christ is the worthiness of his people. And John had every carnal reason to be puffed up. He was a mighty preacher, a mighty one that droves of people came to him. But his purpose in life was not to be exalted above his Master.

He tells us that in verse 29, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." Understand that, the Lord Jesus Christ has his bride, it's his church. It's his work in the church. It's not mine. It's not any minister of God. It's not anyone in this room counseling another. The work is Christ's work. "They all must be taught of me." We must hear the Shepherd's voice.

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly." John says, "My joy is in the bridegroom because of the bridegroom's voice. I have heard the voice of my Shepherd. This is my joy therefore it's fulfilled. My joy in this life is not to be a preacher, it's not to herald Christ is coming, to say you must repent. My joy is in the voice of my Shepherd and the work of my Shepherd." And I pray that as ministers of God, that is our call. We preach Christ crucified, not anything else but Christ's preeminence in life. Christ is life. Christ is the

message of a minister of God. We're messengers sent and anointed by the Holy Ghost to speak Christ, Christ's life. And the sheep, they desire to hear because they need to hear the voice of the Shepherd. Not that we have the power to that, but what does the Shepherd say? And that is left unto the power of the Holy Ghost to bring it to your soul.

And after saying all of this, that's where our text comes, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Do you see where John was brought to say that? John, having a very active ministry? He's not dead. He hasn't passed off this life. He will but that's not the point. The point is he has decreased because Christ has the preeminence in his life.

Today I want to speak to you about three things that I believe the Lord has shown me that comes from Christ increasing and we decreasing, and that is: it is evidenced by a death to self; it's evidenced by the preeminence of Christ in your life; and it is evidenced by growth in Christ.

So the first part I want to look at is a death to self. I do believe Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me," do you see how individual that is when he said that? "To me. This is what the Lord has taught me. This is what he's taught my soul.

"For me to live is Christ." Now notice, he does not say to live Christ is part of his life. Christ is my Lord on Sunday. Christ is my life on the weekends. Christ is my life when everything is going well in my life. That's not the testimony of this child of God. "For to me," what life is to me, "is Christ." The life of Christ is my life. Can you say that this morning? "And to die is gain."

Now, two ways we take that. Certainly for the child of God to die in this life is to go and to be with his Lord with no sin anymore to hinder his relationship with the Lord here on earth; with no pain and no trials and tribulations to hinder those times of unbroken communion with the Lord. So to die is gain but Paul had a deeper meaning. In fact, he tells us many times he died in this life. What is he talking about? An experiential death. We must experience death, a death to self. A death to that thing in us that opposes Christ reigning in our life: the popularity in life, the name in life, the titles in life, the traditions of men in life, the ability and desire to want to be something in this life. The Lord told us that as we are brought to seek the kingdom of God, all things will be added to the children of God. That means he has a plan for every one of us to add to us what we need in this life; what he has ordained us to have in this life. And what one of us in here will ever ever be able to add one cubit to his stature? No man. No man.

Turn with me this morning in our first journey of places that we'll go. We're going to go over to 2 Corinthians 4. We have three or four places to go this morning. We'll begin in 2 Corinthians 4. I want to begin in verse 7. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "But we," the children of God, "have this treasure," the treasure of Christ, we have it "in earthen vessels." Yes, we have it in these decaying bodies that are decaying and dying every day because of sin. But for the child of God and for the church that be in Christ, we have Christ in us, the hope of glory. We have the seed of Christ dwelling in us. That is the treasure, this treasure in earthen vessels. Why? "That the excellency of the power may be

of God, and not of us." The Lord testifies to his children in this life that he must increase and we must decrease, and he reveals that Christ, that he is in us and that his power is the life that we now live. We live by the faith of the Son of God. That's the power of him.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." It is not dependent upon us to have a power in ourselves to seek God, to pray to God, to love God. If it is, you're destined for hell. If the power relies on you to save yourself, you will perish. All of the Scriptures testify to falling short to the glory of God.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Do you testify of what he's about to say? "We are troubled on every side." It is true. In this life, you will be troubled on every side. You will not be accepted in things you want to be accepted in. You will not be accepted by the world in places you want to be accepted in. You will have a warfare in this life that causes you a lot of trouble, the war against your old sinful nature and Christ in you.

We are troubled on every side, and as we hear those words, we curl up and we say, "Oh Lord, yes we are, yet not distressed." Notice the work of the Lord here. We're never left without hope and strength. We may think we are. When it's bleak, when it's tough and all we see is self, but when he increases, we decrease.

I hate that saying that permeates our society today in the religious world: let go and let God. I hate it because, of course, it's the creature that has to do anything to procure a blessing from God. But I will say this: when he increases and you decrease, you will let go. You will surrender. That's the work of the Holy Spirit that resides in the children to decrease them, decrease how we look at, how we view life and how important life is at that moment. No, Christ must take you away from that moment and show you Romans 8:28. He must show you that all things are working for your good.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." Everything that he says first is what we're getting from the world, what we're getting from our flesh, and what we're getting from Satan, but everything that we have in Christ is those "yet" words: but yet he's here, but yet this. That's the power of the seed in Christ that lives in the children of God.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." Do you know that about the child of God's walk? We're always bearing about the sufferings of Christ because we will suffer. It is the way of the cross. It is the life he has ordained for his children. We will suffer.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life," resurrection life, "the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." He has to reveal and manifest his life in us to live unto him because we have this treasure in this earthen vessel, that the power may be of God and not of us.

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." That's what the death in the child of God is for, the glory of Jesus.

"For Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." He must increase, we must decrease. Paul said he was in death oft, often. He had many trials in his life that took him near to death but he had many glorious things even greater to say about the death to self, the mortification that the Lord does and raises up the new nature and Christ in us to live and to reign in the Lord. And you know, we could be in a trial and we could be so, "Woe is me!" for days, and when the Lord comes, in one minute, and he reigns in your soul for one minute and he shows you that he's increased and that you are his, that you are his, when he reveals that you are his, all of that suffering is nothing, all of that trial is nothing because he reveals he is everything and that is where our peace in life is in this life.

He reigns in our life and I'm not talking about a potential saving. I'm talking just like the power of these Scriptures tell you here, what Paul said, this is what he does. It's an absolute Gospel fact. This is what he does. Can he do this? No, this is what he does. This is what he will do in the day of his power for every one of his children. We all have different trials, they're all designed for our own souls by the great Designer of the trial, the Lord Jesus Christ, and every one of them is to, as we'll see at the end, to grow us up unto him.

2 Corinthians 1:9-10, Paul writes, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves." Why? Why this sentence of death? Why must it be pronounced in our life on the carnal part of our life? "That we should not trust in ourselves." We can't save ourselves. We can't make ourselves feel better. We can't will ourselves into things in our life to be part of our life. We can't do it.

"That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death." Did you get that? He delivered us. He set us free by the work, the perfect work on the cross. But that's not all, he delivered us from so great a death, "and doth deliver." He's delivering now today. He's applying the finished salvation in the lives of the children of God. That's our hope. That's our peace. That's our life. He applies what he did on the cross and he says to you, "I did it for you. I died for you."

He has done it in the past if we can all testify that we're the children of God. If we can. He's done it today if we can testify that we're the children of God. If he has. That's not all either, "in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." From the beginning to the end. He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Sometimes it's so hard for me when I'm instructing my children in life because my children look at me and they'll say, "But look at your life, dad. You have such a wonderful relationship with God, with your wife. Look at the family you have." And they'll look at me and say, "The words you say, how do they apply to me? 18, 21, I'm 15, I'm 13. How can these things mean something to me at my age?" And I can tell you today

that at your age they did mean a lot less to me but I never was revealed the truth at that age. I can just share with you the truth that lies in these Scriptures and testify of the Lord's faithfulness, and as I've said before, not as a potential Savior but a Savior who has designed all in my life to bring glory to him and he is increased that I decrease. And I would hope and I would pray that as those things that they see in my life, if they were removed from my life, that that does not shake the foundation of Christ in my life. He must increase, we must decrease.

Life is hard. I look at what our youth have in front of them going forward. I'm a lot more aware of it today than I was even when I was their age back then. I didn't look at the world. I didn't look at the situations going on. I didn't scrutinize everything back then. I look at it today and I say, "O Lord, who is sufficient for such things?" And do you know what the Lord says to me? "I am the same yesterday, today and forever. I am the same Lord who will fight for my children in every age. I will be the Lord and Shepherd of my sheep in every age." And the same Lord that has revealed himself to me will reveal himself to my children and the youth in this room if you be in Christ because he's faithful to do it. He will do it.

Turn with me to Romans 6, beginning in verse 4. This is a picture of death and life. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." That's why as a child of God your desire is to be baptized, to partake in the Lord dying, the Lord being raised again, the Lord living in the newness of life. That's the death and the life that we have in this life: dying to self, being raised to live to Christ.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." That's where life comes from, the resurrection of Christ, this resurrection life.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Remember what we just read? He was the Lord yesterday, he's the Lord today, and he crucifies and he shows us the sentence of death then, he shows it now. So this isn't a one time event and he crucified it and he did it on the cross and then we're not going to struggle with sin. No, this is how he does it in life, he crucifies the flesh and puts it down and he raises up his work and he raises up his preeminence that henceforth we should not serve sin. That's the antidote to serving sin, is Christ in our life, serving Christ in the day of his power. He is faithful.

"For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." And dear ones, if we be in Christ today, death and sin has no dominion over us but the Lord Jesus Christ does because he went first and his work is perfect and what he has done, he has done for all of his children.

"For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon," say to yourself, reason, does that make sense that Christ, is that what

the Scriptures say to you, that Christ does have the preeminence? Christ is increasing, I am decreasing? Are these things true? Is death necessary for Christ to reign? Absolutely. Are these things?

"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Who is the way, the truth and the life. And that's the second thing that the Lord reveals to us as he increases and we decrease, and that is his preeminence.

Turn with me over to Colossians 1. The preeminence of Christ in life. Let's begin in verse 9. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Paul writing this letter to the elect only that are living in Colossae, the Colossians, the church that's there, the people in Christ, telling them that his desire is for them to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. We rely on that. We rely on the wisdom of Christ and the Holy Spirit to give us understanding of both.

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Which, by the way, is that growth we'll talk about here in a couple of minutes. Increasing in the knowledge of God.

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Notice how it's the putting down of one, the old life, the old way, the death that we have in ourselves, to the exalting of Christ, the wisdom of Christ, the knowledge of Christ, the spiritual understanding of Christ. This is what preeminence of Christ and life is.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." In who? The preeminence of Christ. Christ must increase. He must be life in order to ever experience the redemption that we've been bought back from sin, a life of sin, and the debt has been paid and we've been wiped clean because of the work of Christ. We must decrease, he must increase.

You know, that's a hard one because in this life when you are revealed sin, you don't have any worthiness in you. You say, "Lord, I'm not worthy to be saved. Look at all the unbelief I have. Look at how I haven't trusted you. Look at the sins I've done against you. Look at the bad thoughts I've had." That's right. That's part of being decreased, the Lord saying, "Yes, but my grace is sufficient. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him," now we're getting to the meat of the preeminence of Christ, "by him were all things created," and dear ones, that's you and me, "that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things

were created by him," that isn't all, "and for him." The children of God have the seed of Christ and the life of Christ in them for the glory of Christ, for the glory of the Father, for the glory of the Holy Spirit, not for the glory of man, not for the glory in this world. Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord.

"And he is before all things." That's why I said he must increase. As he increases in your life, relationships, college, high school, classes, parents, everything, he is before all things, "and by him all things consist." That's preeminence. Christ is life. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things," all things, "he might have the preeminence."

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Christ must have the preeminence in our life. Christ must have the preeminence in the life of all of his children. He must increase and we must decrease.

John said in 1 John 5:11 and 12, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." That's the preeminence of Christ's life in our life. Can you say that, that life is only in Christ and those who have the life of Christ have life? And do you ever compare that and say, "You know, as the world treats me the way they do, why do they treat me the way that they do?" And I'm not talking about a verbose boasting and saying, "Well, this is why..." No, it's an understanding that the Lord gives his children that he is life. How can you expect love from the world? How can you expect acceptance? How can you expect anything from the world that's at enmity with God? Life is only in his Son. He that has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son, has not life. Yes, Christ must have the preeminence in life.

David said in Psalm 115:1, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." I pray that truth is upon our souls and upon our lips to praise our holy Lord, to say, "Lord, not unto us. Not unto us but unto thy name, Lord, for thy glory."

And yes, as he increases and as we decrease, we die to self, the preeminence of Christ is revealed, and last but not least, there is growth. Turn with me for our last text that we'll go to this morning and that's in Malachi 4. Look at verse 2, "But unto you that fear my name." The Lord said, "I will put my fear in their hearts, my children. Only my children will fear my name." That's who Malachi is speaking to.

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness," that's the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only righteousness, who is all righteousness to his children, "shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." That's where our healing comes from. In all of these trials and all of the hardship, life is hard, how can we live? He heals. He heals the soul to live unto him. By him, by his love and his power, his faith, his peace, because he reigns in our souls.

"Arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." That's what the children of God, our life here is a growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord all of our days, and the Lord is faithful to teach us all of our days. And it doesn't matter if we all lived to be 100, we're still going to be ignorant in many ways of the Lord and we'll need every day to be taught by him. There is no sinless perfection, there is no way to escape this life in a perfect role because we will always be a sinner in need of his grace.

"And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this." Do you see that? In the day that he shall do this, it's the day of his power and those days come many times in the child of God's life because he's faithful to bring them. That's why our Lord is a feeding Shepherd who feeds and nourishes and loves and protects his sheep daily.

Last but not least, Peter says in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And if that was it, we'd say, "Well, that's wonderful to end your two letters, Peter, by that," to say grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he tells what the end result of that is, "To him be glory both now and for ever." That's what growth is. He has to increase, we must decrease. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Let's go back to our text one more time as I read the rest of this chapter. "He must increase," John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all." That's the preeminence of Christ increasing. He shows us our place. He shows our dependency. We're of the earth. We need the heavenly. We need him to reveal himself in our soul. We can't get there of ourselves.

"And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony." Do you hear that? No man. We must be taught of him.

"He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." He had the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Christ did. No error. No sin. All the Godhead upon him. His words are perfect. His words are true. Hey, as the years get past the time that Christ was here, man says, "Those are antiquated words." Not to the child of God. They are life and the sincere milk of the word that I pray that we desire to grow in, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. This word testifies of him. Lo, I come in the volume of the pages written of me, the Scriptures written of me, the book written of me. It's all of him.

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." He must increase, we must decrease.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Safety, life, assurance, eternal life, is all in Christ and is all only for the elect children of God that are in him.

The text one more time, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Dear heavenly Father, add thy power, clarity, and come to our souls for the glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.