

An Absolute for Christianity

John 3:22-30

- 22** After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.
- 23** Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.
- 24** For John had not yet been thrown into prison.
- 25** Then there arose a dispute between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.
- 26** And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"
- 27** John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.
- 28** You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'
- 29** He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.
- 30** He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

Introduction

In a “Peanuts” cartoon, Linus tells Charlie Brown, “When I get big, I’m going to be a humble little country doctor. I’ll live in the city, see, and every morning I’ll get up, climb into my sports car, and zoom into the country! Then I’ll start healing people... I’ll heal people for miles around!” In the last frame, he exclaims, “I’ll be a world famous humble little country doctor!” Charles Schultz, the cartoonist, was poking fun at how difficult it is for us to be humble. We may start out with the goal of being a humble little whatever, but before we know it, we’re into being a world-famous, humble little whatever!

Mac Davis sang the song,
 “Oh Lord, its hard to be humble when your perfect in every way, I cant wait to look in the mirror, for I get better looking each day”

Just this past week we have seen and example of what humility isn't

Mohamed Ali Died and funeral was this week, News papers, magazines, and Web pages, and news programs were saturated the statements that “The Greatest had pasted away”



Mike Tyson
 @MikeTyson



Follow

God came for his champion. So long great one.
[@MuhammadAli](#) [#TheGreatest](#) [#RIP](#)



© Twitter @MikeTyson

Pride is arguably the most deadly and evil of all sins because it's at the root of all other sins. Pride was probably Satan's original sin, when he said, "I will make myself like the Most High" ([Isa. 14:14](#), assuming that this in some sense is describing Satan). Pride was the bait Satan used to tempt Eve, when he set aside what God had said and assured her that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would be like God ([Gen. 3:1-6](#)). Whenever I sin, I am arrogantly asserting that I know better than God knows what is best for me. Thus, as Christians we must constantly battle pride and grow in humility. And if you think you've attained any measure of humility, you've got to be on guard against being proud of your humility

1. True Salvation Starts with Humility

Mt 5:3–7

- "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4** Blessed *are* those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
- 5** Blessed *are* the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
- 6** Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
For they shall be filled.
- 7** Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.

2. True Service is Saturated with Humility

1 Cor 2:1

2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1 Co 4:1–3

4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

1 Ti 1:12–15

- 12** And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry,
- 13** although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.
- 14** And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.
- 15** This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Ti 1:12–15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Any so-called minister, any so-called minister who exalts his own office and his own position into that of a priest, a mediator, is perverted in his claims. There is only one High Priest and one Mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus. Any so-called minister who declares himself an authority over the church is a deceiver and a liar. Any so-called minister who says he exercises power over the church is a deceiver and an antichrist. Any minister who views himself as anything more than a simple Christian equal to every other Christian has corrupted himself. Any so-called minister who claims to be the head of the church, dishonors the Son of God to whom that title belongs exclusively.

Any so-called minister who claims the name Holy Father dishonors the true Father/God to whom that title belongs exclusively, and thus did Jesus say, “Call no man Father.” Any so-called minister who takes the title vicar, or replacement for Christ, dishonors the Holy Spirit who is in the world today, and who possesses truly that title exclusively. Any professing Christians who treat a so-called pastor or minister or a priest as if he were anything more than any other believer, dishonors the Lord Jesus Christ to whom all honor belongs totally and exclusively.

All human ministers are like night stars, stars who appear in the darkness—their flickering light, not enough to light the world. They fade out as the sun rises. Ministers are like those night stars who fade out of sight as the sun arises. As churches defect, as churches fall into apostasy, they think less of Christ and they make more of their ministers. So they keep elevating and elevating and elevating and elevating, until it becomes bizarre. The resplendent decorations, foolish costumes, hats, accoutrements, are inverse to the diminishing of the glory of Christ. As the sun goes out, the stars appear in the darkness. Not enough to dispel the darkness. To the decaying, corrupt church the sun has gone out and the stars have ascended into the blackness of the sky. In a truly holy church, true church, the church makes little of the ministers and much of Christ. And the Son Himself shines so fully and so brightly in a starless sky that His glory fills everything.

J.C. Ryle said, quote: “Every faithful minister must be content to be less thought of by his believing hearers, in proportion as they grow in knowledge and faith and seek Christ Himself more clearly.” The more you see of Christ, the less you see of the minister. “He must increase, I must decrease.” How horrible if someone were to say, “I came looking for Jesus, but John MacArthur got in the way.”

John the Baptist was the greatest man who had ever lived. Therefore, he was the greatest servant of God who had ever

lived, the greatest prophet who had ever lived. Did you get that?
The greatest man who had ever lived.

Think of it, the greatest man who had ever lived in the history of the world, the most privileged prophet, the most popular preacher in centuries, drawing massive crowds, the most powerful messenger bringing the greatest message the world had ever heard—the Messiah is here and here He stands. The ultimate preacher ever. And the lesson he teaches us is how important it is that he fade away and Christ become everything

Review

22 After these things

And then, as recorded in John 2, He came to Jerusalem on that Passover and He went into the Temple, still in obscurity. And then He broke that obscurity and ended that anonymity when He took a whip and assaulted the Temple and threw everybody out, creating a massive, unparalleled sensation. But He still had only a few disciples.

And then He began to do miracles. Then He began to cast demons out and He began to heal people of all sicknesses. And the crowds began to come to Him 'cause John didn't do any miracles. John the Baptist never did a miracle. And there were people who were demon-possessed, and there were people who were ill, obviously. And they knew that Jesus could deal with that, and so based on His miracle power, He began to draw and no one had ever taught like He had. No one had ever spoken like He had, and His teaching attracted people. And then, of course, John was telling the people, "There He is," chapter 1, verse 29; chapter 1, verse 36, "Behold the Lamb of God," "behold the Lamb of God." And He pointed to Christ and He is saying, "Go follow Him, go

follow Him.” Who are you, John? Who are you? “I’m just a voice crying in the wilderness. I’m just getting the road ready for the Messiah. The Messiah’s here. Follow Him.”

So you have John telling people to go after the Messiah. The Messiah attracting them with His teaching and His miracles. And John’s beginning to fade. But their ministries overlap. Their ministries overlap for a while, of necessity, because there’s a transition going on here. And it’s in this context, in this time of transition, that what John the apostle records here takes place. And it’s a wonderfully urgent text for anyone in ministry, because here you have the minister being diminished, fading away, and Christ being exalted.

Lesson

I. The Setting

II. The Schism

III. The Statement

IV. The Solution

I. The Setting

22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.

23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

v. 22 Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.

He remained with them and baptized

Jn 4:1–2

4:1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John

2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples),

v. 23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there

John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. You need much water to baptize people the right way. You need enough to put them under. That was an accommodating place for John, which means there were still a lot of people coming to John. And it was in...the location is called Aenon, near Salim. We don't exactly know where that is. There are

two possibilities. It could be near Shechem, or it could be near Bethshean—both fascinating biblical places, Old Testament places. You can even see them today. Especially Bethshean is an amazing place where Saul was executed. But both of them are in Samaria. That's the interesting thing, both are in Samaria. So what it tells us is, John went north. As soon as Jesus went into the regions around Jerusalem and Judea and began to do His ministry, John went somewhere else. There was no competition in him. He went north into Samaria. He left Judea for Jesus.

24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

Why is this in here? That's really an important statement. You say, "But it's obvious. It just said he was baptizing." So we get it. He wasn't in prison; he was out baptizing.

Why is that statement there? Here is the answer: because in Matthew and Mark, John's imprisonment is recorded right after Jesus' baptism by John. If you read Matthew and Mark, you read John baptizes Jesus and, boom, John's in prison. And by the way, people have been reading those gospels for thirty-plus years by the time John writes. So John wants to make the record of history correct, and so he just pushes apart the baptism of Jesus and the imprisonment of John the Baptist and drops this section in. This is in the chronological flow where it belongs.

I. The Setting

II. The Schism

25 Then there arose a dispute between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.

26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

here arose a dispute between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.

This is simply a reference to the baptisms they were doing
In the Old Testament Context, these would have been a means of expressing Repentance and cleansing of Sin, It was a requirement of any Gentile converting to Judaism to signify that they were leaving there paganism and repenting of there idolatry and sin.

So apparently, When Jesus started baptizing, the dispute arose as to which one was a better baptism, was one superior to the other.

they apparently jealous that more were following Jesus now.
and Johns ministry was lessening

Philippians 1:12

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

- 14** and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
- 15** Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:
- 16** The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;
- 17** but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.
- 18** What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

The New King James Version. (1982). (Php 1:12–18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- I. The Setting
- II. The Schism

III. The Statement

27 John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

It’s like **John 15:5**, “Without Me, you can do nothing.” Gifts, positions, ministries in God’s kingdom rest completely on God’s free grace, God’s sovereign call, privilege, opportunity.

I love what the apostle Paul says about this. He understands this so well. Second Corinthians 4, “Since we have this ministry as we received mercy.” Ministry is a mercy. I’ve said that through the years so many times. Ministry is a mercy. What is a mercy? Something you don’t earn, something you don’t deserve, something you are given even though you’re unworthy. Paul says to Timothy, reminding Timothy: “I was a blasphemer, I was

injurious, I was a murderer, but the Lord counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry and He showed me mercy.” You don’t earn it. You don’t rise to the top because you’re holier than everybody else. It’s a mercy.

In the writing to the Colossians, that wonderful first chapter of Colossians, Paul talks a lot about ministry, but this is one of my favorite verses. Verse 25, Colossians 1, “I was made a minister according to the stewardship of God.” “I was made a minister according to the stewardship of God,” stewardship meaning a responsibility, a deposit, an accountability. The principle is very clear. A man receives nothing when it comes to a call, when it comes to the privilege of ministry, when it comes to the power for ministry, when it comes to the fruit of ministry, except it’s given to him from heaven. That would be true even of Christ. Look at verse 35, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.” Even what Christ had was given to Him by the Father. In 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 7, “For who regards you as superior,” Paul asks, “what do you have that you did not receive? And if you didn’t receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” That is so foundational.

So the principle is very clear. Ministry is a mercy that flows to an unworthy Christian based upon God’s sovereign grace. You can’t earn it. You can’t gain it. You can’t achieve i

- I. The Setting
- II. The Schism

III. The Statement

IV. The Solution

28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’

29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’

I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’

Jn 1:20–23

20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

21 And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

And he answered, “No.”

22 Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”

23 He said: “I *am*

‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

“Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’

John 1:27

27 It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.

29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

What is the best man's job?

Well, in ancient times, the best man, called *shoshbin*, he had a very important role to play, a very important role. Weddings were big deals. They lasted as long as a week. They were planned months in advance, and the bridegroom was getting his house ready because the wedding took place when the house was ready and everything was prepared. And so he had a best man, his closest friend, who would do all the work, take care of all the duties and all the responsibilities, and all the while communicate with the bride and communicate with the bride and let the bride know when and where and how to meet and get everything ready. And then when the day was done and it was supposed to happen, he would take the bride and present the bride to the bridegroom. John says, "That's my job. I'm not the bridegroom. I just want to connect the bride to the bridegroom. I just want to take sinners to Jesus. That's all I want to do. And when I've done that, I rejoice, I rejoice. This joy of mine has been made full. You guys are

jealous. You're upset because Jesus has more people than I do. I'm telling you, this is why I live. This is what I'm called to. This is my joy. My task is done."

30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

The maxim then is this. He must—"must" is the operative word—must be on the increase; I must be the retreating shadow. But the prophet is slipping into fullness of joy. He holds nothing for himself. And oh, by the way, at the end of this time of overlap he is arrested. He's still fighting with his disciples about the issues regarding Jesus, and that's why he sends them to get information. And then he's languishing in the prison, and one day they call for him. They bring him out of his cell, they cut his head off, and they bring his head on a plate into an orgy. And that's the last scene of John.

Andrew Murray (*Humility: The Beauty of Holiness* [Christian Literature Crusade], p. 12) writes,

Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is, from the very nature of things, the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue. And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil.

Dying To Self

When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ,

THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and

you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient, loving silence,
THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any impunctuality, or any annoyance; when you stand face-to-face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility - and endure it as Jesus endured -
THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any climate, any society, any raiment, any interruption by the will of God,
THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good words, or itch after commendations, when you can truly love to be unknown,
THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances,
THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart,
THAT IS DYING TO SELF.

Are you dead yet?

Are you working at growing in humility and pouring contempt on all your pride (to use Isaac Watt's line, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross")? If I'm growing in humility, Christ is increasing and I'm decreasing. If I'm growing in pride, self is increasing and Christ is decreasing.