

LEARNING TO DECREASE, part 2
John 3:31-36

11 May 2014

[Note: Preaching is a live event where God meets with His people, and that cannot be reproduced or duplicated. It is unique every time, and indispensable in the life of the Christian and the church. This is not a complete transcript; it is typically about 80% of the actual sermon. Some common abbreviations in these notes are: “NB” = *nota bene*, “note well” / “+” = an illustration / “→” = an application / “BTW” = By the way / “Cf.” = cross-reference / “I.e.” = In other words / “b/c” = because / “E.G.” = for example.]

Back to John 3 – finishing this great chp today. – Imagine if they had recordings in the ancient world. – Imagine if we could go to sermonaudio.com and, amongst all the top preachers there, we could find John the Baptist and download a few of his sermons?! – You’d skip MacArthur, Piper, Washer, etc. – this is John the Baptist!

Jesus called him the greatest man who ever lived. – Surely also one of the greatest preachers who ever lived! – YET, most of his preaching was never recorded or preserved. Only a few brief snippets given in the Gospels.

Right here in John 3:27-36 is by far the *largest excerpt & best sample* of John the Baptist’s preaching found anywhere. – What a privilege to hold this in our hands.

Through this inspired text, we can journey out to the desert (in a sense), down by the river Jordan. – Here we can listen to the truth blazing forth from the lips of this last prophet of the OT era, this “voice in the wilderness”, this forerunner who prepared the way for Jesus our Messiah.

Stand, Read vv. 22-36 & Pray: Jn. 1:14,16...

Give title...

How appropriate for Mother’s Day – one of the most humbling, sacrificial tasks in all the world!..

More than once in the Gospels, Jesus declared, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, BUT whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14; cf. 2 Sam. 22:28; Prov. 29:23; Jam. 4:10; Lk. 1:52) – But nothing comes more natural to us than self-exaltation. – And nothing is harder for us than self-humbling.

Here’s the key verse, John the Baptist’ life motto, his epitaph on his tombstone you could say: Jn. 3:30...

It sounds spiritual; we admire such a rare attitude... *But what does this really look like* – to make yourself decrease so that Christ might increase? –

There is a great OT illustration of this ‘He must increase, I must decrease’ attitude: **Jonathan & David**, in the book of 1 Samuel. – Turn to 1 Sam. 18.

In fact, *the whole story of 1-2 Samuel* (all 55 chps) is about God humbling the proud & exalting the humble (all a recurring ‘x-diagram’):

The house of Eli decreases, but God raises up humble Hannah and the prophet Samuel increases (1 Sam. 1-3). – The Philistines decrease, the ark of God increases (1 Sam. 4-7). – Saul decreases, David increases (1 Sam. 8-31). –

David's enemies decrease, David increases (2 Sam. 1-8). – David & Solomon sin and their kingdom decreases, but the hope of a future, perfect king increases (2 Sam. 9-24). – Only Christ, great David's greater Son, would permanently increase and never fail us.

But this decrease-and-increase theme is most vivid in the friendship between David and Jonathan:

Jonathan was son of King Saul. – God had rejected Saul for his pride and disobedience. – Prince Jonathan was the heir apparent, successor to the throne. – But instead, God breaks the pattern and chooses some shepherd boy named David.

What does rugged David know about royalty? – All he does is chase after animals and play a harp. – Power and wealth were second nature for Jonathan; he'd grown up in the palace. –

So HOW would Jonathan handle this shock, that God had chosen David instead of him to be king? – Would Jonathan handle it like John the Baptist's disciples handled Jesus rising fame? – Would Jonathan boil with jealousy and envy, 'Hey, that's my throne! Get outta here!??'...

1 Sam. 18:1-4 – Want to know what a true believer (an OT 'Christian') looks like? – Look no further. –

Jonathan's absolute devotion & undying love for David illustrates the same thing John the Baptist is trying to teach us about our devotion to Christ in John. 3. – "He must increase, I must decrease".

1 Sam. 19:1-3; 20:4, 17, 41-42 – Jonathan risking his life for David, time after time, because he loved David and trusted in David's God. – "He must increase, I must decrease".

Then Jonathan's last recorded words: 1 Sam. 23:15-17 – "He must increase, I must decrease".

→O that we would be a church full of Jonathans! – O for more of this kind of humility in our lives and our churches. (If that is your prayer, John 3 is God's answer to help us learn humility....)

Back to John 3...

Here are some of the most humble, self-effacing, Christ-honouring words ever spoken!

Here in John 3:27ff, John the Baptist is contrasting Jesus with himself and with everyone else. – John is showing us what it means to say *Solus Christus*, that we believe in "Christ Alone".

***A series of NINE CONTRASTS that should humble us and show that we are inferior and Christ is superior.** – I.e., If we are learning to decrease, here are 9 things we will say:

1. v. 27, I receive, but God decides.
2. v. 28, I represent Christ; I don't replace Him.
3. v. 29, I'm only best man, not the Groom.
4. v. 30, He must increase, but I must decrease.

Next John tells us...

5. v. 31, I'm earthly, Christ is heavenly.

Jealousy has a way of disorienting you. – John the Baptist's disciples were so dizzy with envy that couldn't tell up from down, heaven from earth. – They had their above & their below all mixed up:

v. 31 – As God says, "Heaven is My Throne, earth is my footstool" (Isa. 66:1). – WHO should you want promoted & exalted: Someone who speaks from Heaven's throne, or someone on this tiny footstool planet? –

Who should we want to increase: some puny earthling, or the sovereign Son of God, the Man from Above?

Who should be exalted? – Mr. Speck of Dust and Piece of Dirt, or the Heaven-Sent Saviour, God's co-Creator, the eternal Word-made-flesh?

Repeat: v. 31... 'I am earthly, Christ is heavenly.'

NB, John the Baptist is not undermining his prophetic role here. – Nor does this negate any preacher or witnesses' role. – We can and must speak for God. –

HOWEVER: we are fallible and frail, imperfect & inadequate messengers for God. Christ is the only infallible, perfect, unflinching spokesman for God. – He is the God-man, the eternal Word-made-flesh, the one "from above" who is "above all".

As His Father declared at Jesus' baptism, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him."

Here is John the Baptist, the one Jesus' Himself said was the "the greatest man born among women". – Yet he is saying, 'I'm still from below; only Christ is from above, HE is supreme'....

NB, in this 4th Gospel, Christ's heavenly origin is a huge part of John's entire case for the deity of Christ: Jn. 6, Jesus, 'the Bread of God' who comes down out of heaven...I have come down out of heaven...This is the bread which comes down out of heaven...I am the living bread that came down out of heaven', etc.!

Again, John 8, to His enemies, the Jewish leaders: "...if God were your father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God." – Jn. 17, hugely: "...I came forth from you."

Repeat: v. 31... 'I am earthly, Christ is heavenly.'

+ One preacher has said that the time after the service at the door, where everyone passes by and thanks him for the sermon, should be called, 'The Glorification of the Worm'....

→Next time I'm tempted to increase instead of decrease, to exalt Tim more than Christ, I need to take a walk outside on a clear night (like last night's moonlit, balmy sky!). – First, I need to *look down*:

I'm a mere earthling, as Scripture says, a "worm", "grasshopper", "dust in the scales"....

Then I need to *look up*: My Lord & Saviour, Jesus, He spoke the galaxies into existence, He calls each star by name, He holds each planet, He causes the sun to rise & the moon to shine night after night.

'Who am I, what is man, that You are mindful of me, O Lord? O Lord, our Lord. O Christ, Son of God, how majestic is Your name in all the earth.'

Repeat: v. 31... 'I am earthly, Christ is heavenly.'

6. vv. 32-33, I'm a second-hand witness, Christ is firsthand.

v. 32 – Same thing Jesus told Nicodemus earlier: vv. 11, 13...

Christ does not bring us some hearsay, some latest rumour or opinion. – Christ didn't learn these truths or get taught them by some earthly mentor or professor.

Oh no, He speaks as One fresh from the halls of Heaven. He comes straight out of the King's courts, out of the very bosom of God His Father. –

No one speaks more firsthand, and more authoritatively & credibly than our Lord Jesus. (cf. Jn. 8:26,38)

NB, as we keep seeing in John chps 1-3: Christ is omniscient, all-knowing. –

→NB, present tense, "testifies, is testifying" – Even now, today, by His Spirit through His Word, Christ is witnessing. – The Bible is alive, it speaks to us, it keeps talking!...

Are you listening?? – Have you tuned in to His channel, the ultimate courtroom scene, the trial that matters most?...

OR are you like the world that ignores Christ?: v. 32c...(Cf. as we've seen already: 1:10-11,26b; 3:11c,19)

However, as the Apostle Paul declares, "Let God be true, though every man a liar" (Rom. 3). – If you reject Jesus' testimony about Himself, you are saying more about *yourself* than you are about Jesus. – He is not on trial, you are. – Next verse:

v. 33 – To receive Christ's Word is to stamp it & seal it for verification. – Prominent individuals in those days would wear a ring with their own distinctive sign for sealing, their trademark. –

So when you get saved, what are you saying about God? – You are saying, ‘God is right, I am wrong. What God said about Jesus was spot on: Jesus is ‘God’s beloved Son, in whom God is well pleased. I give my ‘Amen’ to all that God has given me in Jesus.’

See, there is such a close union between Jesus & God that when you say yes to Jesus, you are putting your seal of approval on all that *God* is and all that God says.

→ *On the other hand*, if you reject Jesus’ testimony and stiff-arm His Word, what are you saying about God? – You are insulting God and saying, ‘God, You are a liar. Jesus was a phoney. I’m right, You are wrong, Lord....’ –

That’s blasphemy; but that’s what you’re saying if you will not believe.

1 John 5:10: “Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar.”

NB, No room for this patronising nonsense, ‘I believe in God, but just not in Jesus’. – Impossible! – No, you are saying God lied – He lied in OT prophecy, He lied through the angels at Jesus’ birth, He lied at Jesus’ baptism, at Jesus’ transfiguration, etc. –

Repeat: v. 33...

→ Let this sink in for a moment: The day you get saved, by believing in Christ this is what you are saying:

‘My God is true, He can be trusted! I stake life and limb, all I have and all I am, upon this Jesus. I am certain, I harbour no doubts. I bank my life and my eternity upon the promise of Jesus to save me from my sins.’

Repeat: v. 33...

‘I’m a second-hand witness, Christ is firsthand.’

7. v. 34, I’m not a prophet with unlimited anointing, but Christ is.

In the OT, you could not mix the roles of prophet, priest, and king. – Priests had to be from the line of Levi. – Kings were from David’s line. – Prophets were especially called of God.

A man might have one of these roles, but never two or all three. – Never, that is, until the coming of Christ:

v. 34a – Jesus is the final priest, king, and prophet of God. – Jesus is the One greater than Moses that God promised would come (Deut. 18), of whom God said, “I will put My words in His mouth”.

→ Christians today are running after this false prophet and that one. Preachers left & right are claiming, ‘The Lord told me such-and-such’, ‘I had this vision & that one’. – Millions are led astray. –

All the while, this Book of true prophecy (the Bible) is neglected. – Peter called Scripture a “more sure word of prophecy” than even the Transfiguration experience he had with Christ!

Reread: v. 34a...

And in order for Jesus to fulfil this role as God's mouthpiece, He would need an unlimited supply of God's empowering & enabling Spirit:

v. 34b – As John already testified, speaking of Jesus' baptism: 1:32-33. – Just as Isaiah had foretold God would do for this choice "servant of the LORD", Messiah, who would come (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1, "I will put My Spirit upon Him....").

BUT WHAT does this really mean – that God gives the Spirit "without measure", 'without limits, boundaries, restraint' to the Son?...

Answer: We can only receive God's Spirit to a point, measured. – But not Jesus. – God gives Him an infinite supply, because Jesus has an infinite capacity, as God's Son. –

As much as there is of the Spirit, Jesus has. – As many ways as He can have God's Spirit, He has Him in all those ways. – As fully as the Spirit can be known & enjoyed, in all that fullness Jesus knows and enjoys the Spirit of God. (Piper)

+ King David in Ps. 51 had to pray to God, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me", in fear of losing the partial anointing that he once had.

But Jesus could pray the opposite, 'Hold nothing back. Pour out Your Spirit upon Me in fullest measure, overflowing and unlimited, gushing over and never-ending in His supply.'

I'm not a prophet with unlimited anointing, but Christ is.

→ Want an experience with the Spirit today? – Want a Holy Spirit encounter? – Get to know Jesus better, and grow in humility. – Learn to decrease, that Christ might increase. – That will be a true sign of the Spirit's presence in your life....

8. v. 35, I'm not the eternally beloved Son and Heir, but Christ is.

NB, 2 present tense verbs here: The Father is always "giving" the Spirit without measure and always "loving the Son". –

HOW does God love His Son? – BY giving Him His Spirit, without measure.

What else does the Father eagerly donate to His Son?...

v. 35 – "For God so loved?..." – 'His Son, that He gave all things into His hand!'

What kind of father never gives anything to his child? – What kind of love never desires to share? – Yet the best & most generous of earthly fathers are but a faint echo of the original, of God, our heavenly Father, the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Question: What was God doing before creation? – Before time began, before angels were made, before "the morning stars sang together with joy" at creation, before land or sea or sky or animals or people were made, what was God doing?...

John's Gospel loves answering this question. – It's one of John's favourite & most fabulous, deep, mind-blowing themes – we'll keep seeing it! (cf. 5:20; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23-24,26).

What was God doing before creation? – God was loving His Son.

What kept God busy from eternity past? – The family of the Trinity, the fellowship within the Godhead, the love shared between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – their delight in one another.

OR let's ask it this way, even more foundationally: *If there is a God, why is there anything else?* – Why did He bother?...

→ Only a Trinitarian religion can answer this question of what God was doing before creation. – Judaism & Islam can only offer a solitary, lonely God who has no Son or Holy Spirit. – Picture the headline: 'Single God, non-smoker, seeks attractive creation with good sense of humour'. –

If God is not triune, why would He bother to love at all? – If God is not eternally & essentially loving, then how can we say, "God is love" (1 Jn. 4)?...

+ All other pagan gods & other religions – their god(s) create out of a sense of need, or just to use what they create for their own self-centred gratification & raw power.... And all other false gods are barren, solitary gods; they are not Father, they have no eternal Son & Spirit...

→ Recommend: *Delighting in the Trinity*, by Michael Reeves, a book 30 or so of us are discussing 1x per mo at 'Theology Breakfast'. – Get chps 1-4 free from June!...
v. 35, *I'm not the eternally beloved Son and Heir, but Christ is.*

→ Christian: *How can you be sure God loves you?* – When Satan & your conscience team up to remind you of all your sins and failures, how can you know that God still loves you? – Here's how:

Because God loves His own Son. – Only Jesus perfectly deserves & merits God's love. – But because Christ died in your place & rose again, and because of your faith in Him that joins you to Him, you are *no less loved* than the Son Himself! –

Bask in that for a moment.... (The measure of God's love for you is the measure of His love for His own Son.)

v. 35 – John the Baptist told us this back in v. 27...

For John, this meant God gave him a temporary ministry of pointing to Christ.

For Jesus, this meant that God gave him an eternal, permanent ministry as the very Mediator and Heir of?...everything!

That's right: everything. – Everything in heaven, everything on earth, everything under the earth. – Planets and demons, galaxies and nations, stars and souls: reread v. 35...

Paul said, “And he [Christ] is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). – Hebrews 1:3 says, “He [Christ] upholds the universe by the word of his power.”

As Jesus once prayed, Matt. 11:27, “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

→What a rebuke to John the Baptist’s jealous disciples, and to us:

‘You’re concerned about more people following Jesus? Don’t you see that one day the entire world will come under Jesus’ sceptre and bow at His feet? You’re upset about a few more Jews joining Jesus’ team? But one day the whole earth will submit to Jesus’ rule. The sooner you get on board with God’s plan, the better.’

‘There you are upset about Jesus’ fame, but God is thrilled. This Jesus is the very One that God has chosen to deliver His Word (v. 34a) and to be anointed by His Spirit immeasurably (v. 34b).’

‘This Jesus that you want to minimise, God wants to maximise! No one loves Jesus more than God Himself. God loves Him so much that He has entrusted ‘all authority in heaven & on earth’ into His hands.’

‘So you’d better get used to putting Jesus’ first – it’s going to be that way for a long, long time!’

I’m not the eternally beloved Son and Heir, but Christ is.

Want some proof of how much authority God has given His Son?...

9. v. 36, I’m under God’s love or under His anger, depending on my response to His Son.

Here is one of those life-stopper verses in John. – It captures & sums up the entire Christian gospel in one sentence:

v. 36 – What does this tell you about this great man and preacher? He began his ministry, Luke 3, “You brood of vipers, flee from the wrath to come!” – Now he ends his ministry, here is the last note we hear from him in the Gospels, the final line is: v. 36c...

Never was there a more bold & solemn preacher than this one. John the Baptist was a burdened man, a man that lived & spoke with the weightiness of eternity upon him, and the weightiness of sin and the weightiness of God’s wrath that sin deserves.

→Where are these kinds of preachers today? – There is famine today for hearing the word of the Lord and the warnings of the Lord!...

But wait, what kind of God is this? – Pres. tense, upon every unbeliever, every lost person, God’s holy “wrath” is “abiding, dwelling, remaining, residing” right now. –

→Do you believe this? (Do you have a category for this kind of God, the true & living God of the Bible?) – a God of holy wrath and righteous anger?...

+ Our society today has no stomach for this kind of morality: Did you see the cover page of this week's Randburg Sun? – "Newborns Binned" was the headline. – Tells of a 1 mo. old baby found dead in a dumpster right in Honeydew. – But then they quote a social worker who says, "Personally, I do not think the mothers who leave their children in dumpsters are bad mothers." –

Yes they are! – They are murderers! – Stop calling evil good, stop calling infanticide acceptable.

But the fact is, according to Scripture, we are all bad, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). – "There is none righteous, none who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:9ff). –

We are born hating God and hating one another. – Every human would kill God if he could, so that he/she could replace God on the throne. –

But we couldn't get to God the Father, so we killed His Son instead. – Perfect, sinless, full of love and mercy, wronging no one. Yet we nailed Him to a tree.

So HOW does God respond to sinners? – Read it again: v. 36c...

As we saw already: 3:18...

+ You've seen the stickers that say, 'Smile, God loves you.' – But that's not the whole story. – In fact, it's very misleading. – For speaking to a lost world, it would be more biblical first to say, 'Be worried, God is angry.' –

Because they will never comprehend His great love until they first see His holiness and their sin.

+ All over the Bible we see that God is angry at sin and opposed to sinners. – From expulsion out of Eden to a worldwide Flood – from the fiery destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah to the fierce plagues upon Egypt – from Israel's death in the wilderness to her painful exile in Babylon –

Time & again we see that our holy God cannot tolerate sin. – He intensely hates all sin. – He is revulsed by it, and He must punish it:

Ps. 7:11, "a God who has indignation/anger every day". – Exod. 32:9-10, God says to Moses about Israel, "I have seen this people...now therefore let Me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them". –

Later in Deut. 9:8, "...you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He was ready to destroy you." 2 Kings 22:13, "for great is the wrath of the LORD against us".

~ Definition: God's wrath "is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people whom God does not like. It is the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin." (MacArthur)

Same in NT, no change in God's nature or character:

Heb. 10:31 & 12:29, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Matt. 10:28, Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.”

Rom. 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness....” (Cf. Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; Heb. 3:11; Rev. 6:16-17; 19:15, etc.)

I’m under God’s love or under His anger, depending on my response to His Son.

→If this is you, do you understand what v. 36d is saying: God’s wrath is not just some future possibility, if you don’t get saved, that you might end up in Hell, one day. –

No, John is saying here that God’s anger against sin is sitting on you right now. – It looms large, it’s heavy clouds hang over you, it is ready to burst at any moment, it’s dark shadow is cast over you.

If you do not turn to Christ to be saved, then when you die or when Christ returns – God will not start to be angry with you then. – No, that will only be the final expression and eternal outworking of His disposition toward you right now. – What a horrible, unthinkable terrible outcome....

NB, John’s Gospel teaches that not only does eternal LIFE start now for all who come to Christ, but also this: That eternal WRATH starts now for all who refuse to come to Christ.

→BUT all of that can change the day you receive Christ! – The angry God of the Bible is also a loving God, as this same chp of John declares (3:16!) and as the rest of Scripture declares....

→NB, v. 36b, to believe is not just to agree, to assent, to decide. – Not, it is more: it is to “obey”. – To follow, to feast, to love, to trust, to surrender to Him fully and completely....

CONCL. – Repeat 9 points...

→WHICH is it for you at this moment: life or wrath? – God’s smile, or His frown? – God’s favour, or His fist? – His approval, or His anger? (God against you (bow bent, lightning bolts ready, weapons aimed, gun loaded) vs. God FOR you (arms open); It’s miserable enough having another earthly person angry at you)...

One is the most marvellous position in the world, the safest & sweetest spot imaginable. – The other is the most horrific place to be, the most dangerous & terrifying of positions.

WHICH is it for you at this moment: God’s life or God’s wrath?

No question is more important! – Answer very carefully and honestly; but answer urgently!...

PRAY

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What has struck you most about John the Baptist's example?
2. How is Jonathan's attitude and relationship to David a model of humility for us?
3. What does it mean for you that Christ came from heaven, not earth, and that He is "above all"? What things are we tempted to view as above Christ or beyond His control at times, the things that most overwhelm us and tempt us to be afraid or anxious?
4. Why does it matter that Christ brings us a credible, authoritative witness? Why does it matter that Christ has an unlimited supply of God's Spirit? Why does it matter that Jesus always and only taught God's Word?
5. What does it mean for our faith that God so loved His only Son and made Him heir of all things?
6. How is v. 36 a great summary of both the gospel and of John the Baptist's entire ministry? Why do most people scoff at any mention of being presently under God's wrath?

LEARNING TO DECREASE

John 3:22-36

Application Exercise

Let's flesh out this humility further and put some skin on it. What does a pride-slaying, humility-pursuing, Christ-exalting person look like? *Here are some specific applications for 'learning to decrease', for cultivating humility in our lives:*

1. Php. 2:3ff: The humble are those who have the "mind of Christ", who are self-emptying, self-denying for the good of others. – They "consider others more important than themselves" – They truly look out "not only for their own interests, but also the interests of others."

They are the first to volunteer for the tasks no one else wants to do in the church. – They are good listeners who take a genuine interest in what you have to say. – They take risks by walking up to a stranger at church and introducing themselves.

→What an opportunity we have for this lately with so many new faces. – We live in a mobile age. – Many urban congregations experience a 50% turnover every 5 years! We'd better get used to launching out of our comfort zones and reaching out to newcomers. – What a great chance to deny self and exalt Christ, by reaching out to strangers. – Think about it: That's how Christ first loved me. – He didn't wait for me, He came to me!

2. Eph. 4:2-3 & 1 Pet. 3:8 show us that humility reduces conflicts in the church. – Humble people are patient, gentle, tolerant and diligent to preserve spiritual unity in the church. – They are careful to avoid conflict or stir up strife in the body. – They bite their lip before a word of gossip or slander comes out.

3. 1 Pet. 5:5 shows that humble people "clothe themselves with humility toward one another" – submitting to those in authority, washing the feet of others, alert to the needs of those around them.

1 Pet. 5:7 goes on to show that proud people get anxious, but humble people trust God with their worries and cast all their burdens upon Him, knowing that He cares for you.

4. Proverbs shows that another key mark of humility is teachability and an openness to correction, in contrast to the proud & stubborn fool (Prov. 9:8-9; 27:5-6, etc.). – Learning to decrease means learning not to be defensive, but to welcome rebuke and counsel.

5. Romans 12:15 tells us that humble people are able to ‘rejoice with those who rejoice’. – Even if we did not get invited or receive the same blessing, we can still rejoice for them and with them. – This is what John the Baptist’s proud disciples refused to do. – Being happy for others is a real test of our humility, and ultimately of our trust in a sovereign & good God.

6. Paul’s example in Acts 20:17ff – he told the Ephesians elders that in his nearly 3 yrs with them, he “served the Lord with humility”. (You know you’re making progress in humility when you observe your own humility, as Paul does here.) –

WHAT did Paul’s humility look like in Acts 20? – “tears, trials...not shrinking back” from teaching them everything in God’s Word. – Humility = willing to suffer for Christ, willing to teach doctrine, willing to warn the flock of approaching danger, willing to work hard and be generous.

These are six specific ways to take Jn. 3:30 off of the shelf and bring it into your daily life.

But behind and beneath and under all six of these ways to improve your humility is this one great root of all true humility: *a high view of Christ*. – See, the more we share John the Baptist’s lofty, exalted view of Jesus, the more we want to decrease!

The more I see Christ’s greatness & superiority, the less I want you to see ME and the more I want you to know Him! – The more I see the majesty of God’s Son, the more I want to be eclipsed by Him and get myself out of the way! – THEN, Jn. 3:30 becomes, not just a duty, but an overwhelming desire & passion – Jn. 3:30...