

# Acknowledging God

by K.P. Yohannan

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*Acknowledging God means to recognize and submit to His will, living life based on His rhythms and seasons, and choosing to forgive and let go of hurt and anger.*

**Duration:** 25:37

**Topics:** "God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of the people of Israel who were captured and taken as captives to Babylon due to their disobedience to God. The speaker emphasizes that even in their difficult circumstances, the people were lamenting the loss of their cultural and material comforts. However, the speaker encourages the listeners to acknowledge God in every aspect of their lives, just as the ancient fathers called for a sacramental life. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of reading and consistently meditating on God's word, as it is a powerful tool for guidance and understanding.

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## Transcript

Acknowledging God, that is our theme. Now in the passage in Jeremiah, if you read the whole story, which I suspect you may have, it talks about a real historical event where the people of Israel, having done something wrong, they didn't do what God told them to do. And they end up as captives in Babylon.

They were captured and they lost everything and they carried off like they are in another land. And the passage we read is a response from God to these people who possibly could be talking all the time among themselves. Oh no, what a miserable life it is.

We can't get our coconut, our morigari, our pavakya, our samosa, our yogurt, oh that nice Punjabi lassi. And they're talking about the friendship, the joy, the worship and all the things they enjoyed, the culture that brought meaning to their life, everything is gone. And you can imagine, the mother is cooking in the kitchen and the children are talking to her and then she is constantly upset and the daughter says, mom, mother why are you so angry? Me angry? Can't you see what happened? Look at this life.

And then she says, look at you, how old are you? I'm 22 years old. Huh? That's what I'm telling you? Where is your husband? Who's going to find you a husband? All these heathens are here, they are not Jewish people. I'm worrying about you.

Don't you understand my problems? And the girl walks out of the house saying, kya kare yaar, sab gadwadi hai. But then God sent someone to speak his words. And the prophet says, don't worry, don't worry, he must have an Indian.

No matter what happens, he said, don't worry. He said, God is a good God. He has a plan.

Now you think you are such a holy, special person, set apart from God, you don't want to get involved with these Babylonians, these unconverted or unholy or so-called sinners. You think maybe that is a way to prove and make some point with God. He says, don't do that.

Who is saying it? God. Get involved with the society. Give them marriage and take their boys and girls.

And then he says, pray for your enemies. Pray for God's blessing. So that when they are blessed, your life will be blessed together.

That's not even biblical prophecy to begin with. So then also, those days also there are crazy people like that. And God said, don't listen to them.

You will be led astray. That kind of tells you when you and I are in difficult places. Now listen very close.

Difficult places of uncertainties about the future, about money, about relationship, about suffering and sickness and all these difficult things we face and fears of all kinds. You need to be very, very careful who you listen to. Look at all your hair.

All black, black, black, all black. Some of them are white, white, but they are black, black. Now all of you are young, but look at my hair.

Is this black? I'll punish you. Is it white? That means I travelled a few more miles in this journey. And what I want to tell you, life as it is, Bible says, full of troubles.

Even the best of it got problems. We are born into this fallen world where things are not right and we are victims of a lot of stuff that we have no responsibility for and we don't know what to do with it, but we are in the pain. But that is a very sensitive time where you are not really able to be on the guard for your life.

It's very fragile, very fluid state of mind. Then comes somebody giving advice, an email, a telephone call comes and somebody says, yeah, this is not the right thing you are doing because of this, because of, then they start prescribing you the answers. And that's what happened.

Remember the story about the prophet in the Old Testament, God said, you just go there and deliver the message and go straight back. Do not eat, do not drink, do not talk to anyone. But the story, he goes and he does what God tells him to do, but then just meets an older prophet who says, oh, by the way, God just talked to me that you were going to do that there and then also he told me to come with me and have some meal.

And so the young man thought, well, who am I? I'm just a nobody, an old prophet told, so I will do this. And that's what he did. What happened? He lost his life.

And so it is extremely important that in the times of pain and suffering and difficulties that you listen to godly counsel. There will be plenty of people who offer you answers that has nothing to do with God's ways. Remember the disciple of Christ that loved him so dearly said, Jesus, oh, please, please don't let

this happen to you.

And Jesus said, Peter, you're not speaking on behalf of my father. It is the demons that are using your voice. You see, natural instinct we all have for a better life, better health and better circumstances and freed from difficulties, including the speaker, your Metropolitan.

This is humanity. Welcome. This is real.

But this is a time you need to be careful that who we listen to and the person we need to listen to is God. Now that is the difficult thing. Where is God? God's word becomes so powerful.

This is where you need to read God's word consistently. The Holy Spirit can guide you. And by the way, Bible is a storybook, storybook, stories of people just like us.

The other day I was thinking about, you know, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And, you know, it again dawned on me that Jacob, when God met with him, his name was changed to Israel, Prince of God. But then after that, dozens of times, God instead of saying God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, he says God of Jacob.

And I said to myself, this is nice that Jacob who was in trouble all the time, who was not a perfect human being, he didn't live up to the standard, but God attached his name to the weak, the failing, the suffering. And this is beautiful, comforting. And so when you read God's word, you hear God saying to you, because there is no experience in your life you will go through that someone has not gone through in God's word.

As a matter of fact, you will find hundreds of illustrations. You tell me any, I will tell you it is there without even looking at the Bible. So that is reason, listening to God's word is important.

And the prophet is saying, don't listen to them. So the emails and the Facebook and the newspapers and anonymous letters and the telephone calls and things, you should remember the story of Nehemiah. God told him, go there and do this.

He goes there. All of a sudden here comes some people saying, there is a prophet. So acknowledging God, even when we are in trouble or we don't know what to do.

Then you have the passage in Psalm. If you read that, I read that last night, it's amazing things all about him. There is nothing about this God that he lacks anything.

And the best is to trust him. That means you plus God is majority. And he is not judging us by righteousness and justice, but is full of compassion and mercy.

So how do you acknowledge this God? Acknowledging God in the midst of suffering and rejection and serving him and acknowledging him in the totality of our human experience. Psalm 78. It's a condensed version of the history of Israel.

And who is saying that? God. In the early days, I remember getting condensed editions of all kind of novels and books because 3,000 page book, now it is only 100 pages, the condensed version. This is just one page of a massive history.

But you read that chapter, you read again and again and again, again and again, again, again, and again, the statement they forgot. Oh, now you see in my cassock and my robe, the Orthodox look. But if you go

with me to a house, that I live, there in the closet.

Closet means, hey, closet in India is, no, it's not toilet. It's a cupboard. And I have some hangers that are holding on to some old clothes.

And one happened to be a gray, no, blue, oh no, looks gray. Oh, I remember getting that shirt I got in Singapore. I remember the street.

I remember some of us fellows went and I picked that shirt. It was the best shirt in the whole universe. But that was in 1971.

And the shirt is still there, hanging in the closet. And once in a while, I mean, I go there to pick up my new clothes and things like that. But that one shirt is very visible, hanging there.

Two, three buttons are gone. And the collar is all opened up and very old. And you have holes everywhere, maybe here, there.

And I don't think I can wear that. I ate a little more food since then. Dal fry and mutton curry and all that.

And put a few more pounds. But that old shirt speaks very loud. The moment I opened the door, you are here.

I want to tell you something, don't forget. I said, I don't forget. You don't have to scream at me for that.

Oh, no, everybody forgets. We just want to make sure you remember those years on the streets of Rajasthan and Punjab and Himachal Pradesh and Delhi and so on. And remember the time when you just had two shirts and both of them got dirty and you must get in the bathroom and wash.

But you had nothing to wear. You had to wait for a while until one of them is half dry. And I happened to be one that is not all cotton.

So I was the first one that you'd wear and walk out. Oh, I remember I got a pocket, but there was not one penny, one rupee in the pocket. You are not allowed to do that.

Oh, then you don't want to forget also. You wore me hundreds of times. And places you took me to, some of the dirtiest dhabas, where your left hand became the fan to drive off all the billions of flies.

Especially a culture that we are the product of what he called shame on our culture. We don't want to say the real stories, do we? How are you? How is your family? Instead of answering straightforward, like people in Europe and others do, oh, no, my great uncle was this and that. My uncle's aunt and his brother-in-law is a collector there.

We so desperately want to forget. And we do forget. And we deliberately deny so that in the present, that moment, we feel better.

And that happened to the people of God who were living 400 years plus in slavery. Skin and bones abused, brutalized, raped and killed. And God stepped down and rescued them.

The sea opens up and food from heaven is poured down. Their clothes never get worn out. And God did so much.

And now they turn around and stab him on the back and say, we don't care about you. Who are you? We know better. And then God says, I still love them.

I love them so much. I care about them. I'm not an evil person.

But the problem is with their unbelief and with their words, they tied my hands so that I can't do anymore. It is like a loving, gentle mother who weeps for her children who will do anything. And the kids come.

And while she's serving the food that she cooked morning to night, they chopped her hands off. And then they walk out. You say, that's weird.

That's cruel. Well, believe it or not, that's what you and I often does. And we do.

We have a choice to live our life on earth based on the calendar of India or America or every calendar. Or we have a choice to live our life with the rhythms and seasons of God and his activities. Baba, after all, he made this stupid little earth and he owns it.

And everybody live here. It says the earth belongs to the Lord and everything in it. So don't be so stupid to think that you are the owner.

I am the owner and we are in control. We are not. Surprise.

And therefore, it will be rational, the normal thing to do, to live our life based on what he says, the rhythms, the seasons, and go along with him, acknowledging him all your ways. It's the Bible. She agrees.

It is in the Bible. Acknowledge him in all your ways. All is not some, right? All means all.

And he will fulfill his plan. And his plans are always good. You read the rest of the passage in Jeremiah.

Amazing. He says, you people in Babylon, you're going through the crazy time, but remember my plans about you is all for good and nothing for bad. And some of the ancient practice of monasteries from the very, very beginning of the church, when a group of people meet in the monastic systems, when they have meal, there may be 100, 200 people sitting there, they're having meal.

It's a pin drop silence. You hear nothing. It's perfect stillness.

And then somebody on the side will open the Bible and start reading Bible passages while they're having their meals. They are listening to God's word. And then the seven hours of prayer, seven seasons of prayer throughout the day, the seasons of prayer, we have three of them that we maintain morning, noon and night.

But there are so many things you'll find. Why people, why these sisters cover their head in the church? I don't see them doing that when they are walking around. No, we don't tell them apart from our, you know, sister's order.

Why do we do that? We do that because in Corinthians 11, God said, this is what I want you to do. Acknowledging God and then forgiving other people. When people are mad at you, they do wrong to you.

You have a choice to say, I'm going to kill you. Or I've forgiven so much. I'm supposed to be going to hell and he forgave me.

Nothing much, let them go and forgive them. I'm not making up stories. There's a lot of people in my life that hurt me so deep, so bad.

But you know how I forgive them? I found the greatest secret of my life ever. That is, I discovered through my readings that time and space is only relevant for us. How many more years I have to live and how much I have.

What is it? So all of a sudden I said to myself, I am dealing with hurt and betrayal and anger and all these things based on time and space. But God is not dwelling in time and space. He's about And therefore the worst criminal, the bad guy who's doing so much hurt me and troubled me, who knows in another few years with a little more time and space, God working, he will be a saint.

So why I should be upset with him? Because I only can understand my reference of time and space. But God works beyond all that. So I find myself so completely freed from having to agonize over crazy people that are doing things to hurt me.

This may not be your trick, but what I'm saying, acknowledging the Lord is not just, you know, praying and saying a few words, but your behavior, your attitude and things you do, everything becomes visible. By the way, I conclude, after all, acknowledging God is not Protestant evangelical mental ascent. It is actually transformation into the human man Jesus who lived and showed us the way.

And that means when you are in the bathroom, you brush your teeth and then, you know, the basin. You do that, but then you're walking away. Look, nobody heard you.

Nobody watches you. But then you stop and come back and think, oh, I'm leaving that thing in that basin. And next to me, my brother coming, who is Jesus, my sister coming, who is Jesus, oh, I need to clean it up for them.

All of a sudden, you do that not because you're afraid of someone, because vertically you link your life with someone that you love. He is acknowledged. You're eating food and your stomach can only handle so much food.

But you are greedy like we all are. But then you see other brothers and sisters sitting around you. Maybe they need more food and you choose to take less so others can have more.

And on and on like that. In everything, you live your life what the ancient fathers called the sacramental life. Your life is not your own.

It is sacramental. 24 hours, everything. And this is Christianity.

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