

Living as children of God

by Sandeep Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the new covenant that God has made through Jesus, making believers children of God. It highlights the need to grasp the promises of the new agreement to avoid living by outdated rules. The sermon stresses the significance of viewing God as a loving father and the privilege of being called children of God. It challenges listeners to have a genuine desire for spiritual nourishment through God's word and to live in holy fear as priests offering acceptable sacrifices to God.

Scripture: Hebrews 10:5, Romans 12:1, 1 Peter 1:17, 1 Peter 2:4, 1 Peter 2:1, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Matthew 1:21, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24

Topics: "New Covenant", "Identity as Children of God"

Description

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Transcript

For the last few weeks before, in the last year, I was speaking on the new covenant, and I wanted to continue to share some more thoughts about the new covenant life, the new agreement that God has made. Most Christians are not aware that God has torn up an old agreement that existed, that God gave, God gave to Moses, was called the old covenant, but God tore it up. He called it faulty, and he made it obsolete, and he gave us a new agreement.

So since most people don't understand it, most people are not taught on it, they read the Bible, and it's just a mystery. They don't understand how it works. They don't understand what promises to take to the bank to cash, because not all the promises apply, because part of some of them are on the old agreement.

And so if we don't understand the new agreement, we're cashing checks that are invalid, that are obsolete. The expiration date is gone. And so it doesn't work.

We say, well, it's in the Bible. And so that's why it's so important for us to understand the new agreement that God made, not through Moses, but through Jesus. And we've spent a lot of time talking about it.

And one of the things that God does as part of the new agreement is God made us children of God. He made us sons and daughters of God. That was not something that even the Israelites in the old agreement could have.

They were not children of God, they were children of Abraham, and God tried to treat them as a father treats a child, but the relationship was not secure. Jesus came as the son of God, and as he died and when he rose again, he cleaned the very bottom of our hearts so that the Holy Spirit could dwell in us, so that we too could receive the opportunity and the privilege to be called children of God. So tremendous privilege for us to have God as a father.

Jesus was killed because he called God father, it says in the Bible. So we must recognize what an incredible important truth it is that God is our father, and Jesus came to reveal God as a father. That is why Jesus said, when you pray, don't say Yahweh, don't say my great Jehovah, don't say oh holy God, say our father who art in heaven.

Those are very important words that we may flippantly say and we may say often, but there's a lot of meaning behind it, so much so that Jesus died for it, was killed for that. So I prepared a few slides to talk about the new covenant life and what it means to live as children of God. And the previous time I spoke on it about a month ago is the next slide where I talked about that the spirit has been given, the following slide, which gives us the ability to call God father, but not just father, Abba, which means dad.

So that daddy cry, which is something that small children learn to call out towards their father is the essence of the relationship that we must have with God. We memorize, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That is a response to this love that God pours out into us which says, let me reset the relationship between you and me as a father to a very small child, that you can come to me just as a small two-year-old to three-year-old comes to God, and you can call me not Yahweh, not Jehovah.

You don't have to treat me with some formality. You can treat me as your dad. You can treat me with that specialness of intimacy.

And that's so important for us to recognize that that's such a great privilege for us to have. And God wants us to worship God in that way, all the way in our hearts. So the next slide I talk about what it means to be children of God.

And that's from 1 Peter chapter two. We were already there earlier today. But in 1 Peter chapter two, I wanted to underline a couple of things that must be true if we are children of God.

And it is good for us to pause and ask ourselves, are we children of God because we just believe some facts? Or is it true that we are children of God? We may be able to teach some children to say by rote, hey, you're my child, but that doesn't make them my children. They have to have that relationship with me. Me to them and them to me.

So we should not just say because we say we are children of God, because the Bible says it is true that we are children of God, just it makes it, it happens. As we read in 2 Corinthians chapter one, verse 20, God gives us his promises, but we have to agree with it. We have to countersign the check.

We have to say our amen to it, which means it will be so, it is so. We have to countersign it. And here's what the proof of us countersigning the truth that we are children of God.

See in 1 Peter chapter two, verse one through three. Therefore putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, here it is, even as a newborn baby, like newborn babies long for the pure milk of the word so that you may, by it you may grow in respect to salvation if you have tasted the kindness of God. If we are born again, we must have a basic desire for spiritual food.

We must have that in us. It is as essential as a doctor looks at a newborn baby and sees whether that baby has a desire to be fed. And that analogy has to really sink in deeply within us as we examine ourselves and say, if I had a newborn baby born to me, and if that baby had no desire for food, that baby's not gonna live.

That baby's organs are gonna fail awfully soon, and that baby's gonna be dead after a very long. Jesus said man does not live by food alone because man's not just a physical body. Animals live that way.

But man is also a spiritual being, so man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of God that proceeds from his mouth. So if we are not interacting with God's word as babies interact with food, we must question whether there's spiritual life in us. We must seriously and genuinely question whether there's any spiritual life in us.

We can claim we're born again. We do all kinds of things. We give our bodies to be burnt.

We give all our possessions to the poor. Meaningless. If we don't have a genuine desire for spiritual milk, which is the word of God, we are not even a newborn baby in the faith.

And then I question whether maybe we were a newborn baby. Maybe we had a desire to know what God's word said and what God wanted us to do, but we must be very worried. We've lost our desire for spiritual food.

You know what you'd do if you had a newborn baby and it didn't drink for one day. We'll search the internet. You'll fly across the world and meet a doctor who can solve that problem.

But we can go days and days without any spiritual food and we think we're okay. God's word is very clear here. Now, there's a difference between reading scripture and taking God's word as food.

It's a difference. There's a difference between knowing what is in scripture, like all the Bible stories, the memorizing scripture, and eating, taking God's word as our food. There's a much bigger necessity for it.

Because what does the baby do with the food? If the food comes into the baby, the food is not for pleasure. It's for the food to go into the body, for the body to assimilate it and grow from it. If it is not growing, it's gonna die.

So growth is extremely important. And it says here in verse two, so that you may grow in respect to salvation. So very simply, just like a baby takes milk in and it grows from it, becomes bigger and bigger, we too have to take in God's word so that we grow in the strength of our salvation, which means salvation is to be saved.

We grow in being saved from our sins. That giants in the land are being knocked off, are not just continuing to exist. Not all the giants, but maybe the next giant is starting to get knocked off.

That's what it says will happen even to newborn babies in the faith. That as they drink the word of God and treat it like a newborn baby treats milk, as we, when we're born again from day one, we're supposed to be

consuming God's word. And the proof of it is we grow in the salvation that we receive from our sins.

Jesus didn't come to save us from hell. He came to save us from our sins. The Bible is extremely clear about that.

Matthew 1, 21, as we know. So for our salvation, it's not salvation from hell so that I don't go to hell. It's salvation from my sins.

And we have sins that are continuing to persist with us. And Jesus' blood was shed so that we don't have to face the penalty of it, but the power is still over us, whether it's lying, whether it's the love of money, whether it's lust, unforgiveness, anger, the approval of other people, our friends, our relatives, our coworkers, something or the other. Things that the Bible clearly warns us is evil.

They can be giants that are affecting us. And God says, you need to be growing. Just like I look at my newborn and say, I'm hoping to see growth a year from now, two years from now, three years from now.

I must be growing as a Christian. The moment I've been born again, I must see this growth as it relates to salvation to be saved from my sins. So I think among us, as I try to apply it, I see that there are two kinds of people, I think.

There are some of us who don't even read God's word. Maybe we don't see it as food to nourish us. We barely read it.

And if we do read it, it's an obligatory chore because we have some rule that I must do this every now and then. We do it. When was the last time you read God's word for food? When was the last time you got so hungry spiritually? And you said, God, I want you to speak to me.

Maybe sometimes God will send us trials in our lives just for that reason, so that we will feel our spiritual hunger and our thirst. I have to keep telling myself as I read God's word, God, this is food. This is not, this is food for my spiritual being, not food for my mind.

Because it's so easy for us to feed our minds and our intellect. But if we're not even paying attention to reading God's word, let us recognize the dire consequences of not paying attention to this book and putting it on the shelf. Your organs, spiritual organs are packing up.

Doesn't take long. Hebrews chapter three, verse 13 says that we must encourage one another daily. Otherwise we can fall.

Because the deceitfulness of sin, sin is not explosive like a big bomb, it's deceitful. So it makes you think everything is okay. It doesn't tell you on the inside your spiritual organs are packing up.

The kidneys are failing now. The liver is not working. Because you're not feeding it.

Because the word of God has been reduced to a book that you read on special occasions every now and then. But I think a lot of us, if you come here regularly, we may be reading God's word, but again, we don't treat it as food. The analogy that I thought of is we treat it as gum.

You know what it means to treat something as gum? The two kinds of gum, at least that I know of, is bubble gum. I don't buy bubble gum much anymore. But when I was a kid, I loved bubble gum.

Why do you like bubble gum? You like to blow bubbles. Like a nice little big balloon, you see how big it gets. Or a massive balloon it gets, right? It's a beautiful bubble, right? Teenagers or children, you love bubble gum.

And so we love to read God's word to show off, to know more, to tell other people, hey, guess what I learned? Guess what I learned? Let me show you this bubble. It's God's word, and I chew it, and I chew it, and I blow a big bubble. Usually it blows back up in my face, as most bubble gum does.

But that's what we read God's word with. Ooh, let me, should tell everybody what this great thing I learned today is all about. It's the big bubble.

Then it goes back into your mouth. It's just bubble gum. Doesn't have any nutritional value.

Doesn't change us. Doesn't feed us, doesn't nourish us, doesn't help our livers, doesn't help our lungs, doesn't help our kidneys. Everybody was amazed.

Wow, look at the size of that bubble. It's like fireworks. Has fireworks warmed you at any time? Nice show, big bang, nice thundering.

It's gone, back to pitch dark. No warmth, no light. And so we can put the food into our mouth.

That's what a lot of us do, because we memorize scripture. We study God's word regularly. We are going through the Bible, all different things.

So we can say, well, at least I'm paying attention to the Bible. Yeah, but is it, are you just treating it like bubble gum? Using it to show how you're better than other people. Or how you're being, doing this, doing that.

No nutritional value. Is it food? Is it helping us grow? And then the other kind of gum is chewing gum. And we use chewing gum even as adults.

We use chewing gum when we're in a plane and we want to pop our ears. So in this plane, as it is changing, we don't like what it's doing to our body. So when we're in trials, give me some chewing gum, let me chew on it, let me get over it.

Okay, now it's over, spit it out. Thank you God, plane landed. My ears are not popping anymore.

Gone, off goes the chewing gum. So in times of trouble, times of affliction, where's the chewing gum? Where's the appropriate verse? Brothers, I need prayer. Yeah, let me show you, John 14, six.

John 21, three, something or the other. Chewing gum worked, okay, let's spit it out now. Just to pop my ears.

But also, another way it is, another reason I use chewing gum is to make my breath smell better. I just want to smell good. I don't want to offend other people.

Because I've been living without brushing my teeth all week. Living in sin all week. Eating onions, whatever it is, garlic.

And now I'm coming to church, give me some chewing gum. I make breath smell better for a little bit. Now I'll go back to my life.

No nutritional value if you just spit it out. Doesn't change us, doesn't help us in any way. Food is very different, may not taste as good.

May not make us smell better in the short run, but it'll make us grow. In respect to being saved from our sins. Dear brothers, dear sisters, we at NCCF are in great danger of the word of God being reduced to gum.

Bubble gum, chewing gum, something. Nutritional value to where we become strong and the giants of the land are getting knocked off. We are increasing our ownership of the holy land, which is our body.

This is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We have to grow in respect to salvation. I want to give you this verse in Hebrews 10, verse five, where it says that God's not interested in sacrifice, God's not interested in burnt offerings.

Hebrews 10, verse five. God said, I'm not interested in that. I'm gonna give you a body.

And he says, that's what I want you to keep hold of. You don't need to go to Israel. You don't need to give all your money to the poor.

I just want you to keep your body holy. This is the holy land for me. Your body, starting with your heart and your soul and your mind, God has given you that and said, that is your one responsibility.

Keep it holy. From all sin, from all sin, every last giant, we attack it as we are today, with the next giant that's gonna come. And so the second point that I made on the next slide is children of God must live their lives in holy fear.

That's actually, if you go back to 1 Peter chapter one, the previous, the next slide, yeah. 1 Peter chapter one, verse 17. It's one of the most beautiful verses that helped clear up a lot for me many years ago about what do I do if God is a loving father? What does it mean about sin? And how do I interact if God is my father? And it says in 1 Peter chapter one, verse 17, if you say you're a child of God, if you say that God is your father, if you say the Lord's prayer and say, our father who art in heaven, if you say that, just remember that this father impartially judges according to each one's work.

He's not gonna be partial in any way just because you were nice to other people or just because you said this or did that. He's gonna impartially judge you based on your very heart. And because of that, if you call God as your father, here's another proof that you're actually living as a child of God.

You will live in holy fear. The previous verse, 16, says, you shall be holy. So we have to live in holy fear on our time here on earth.

I was thinking, well, Lord, what does it mean for me to live in holy fear before you? And here's the passage that came to me, which is in the very next chapter, a few verses later. Right after he says, drink the milk, he says in 1 Peter chapter two, verse four, and now coming to him as to a living stone. Who's coming to whom? Coming to Jesus, who's a living stone which was rejected by men.

Rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God. We come to Jesus, rejected by man, but God said, you're the most precious person who ever existed. You also, you also, also living stones.

Jesus is the cornerstone, but we also are precious living stones are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood. That's the picture that I had. As I thought, Lord, how do I stand before you with holy fear?

I stand as the priest stands before God.

And many religions have this concept of priests. This is not unique to Christianity. Hindus have it.

Priests are a big deal, a special caste for priests. So I grew up in India where that was the majority. So did some of us.

Judaism has it. Judaism had all those priests. We read all about that in the Old Testament.

Catholics have it. The Protestants were not meant to have it. The Protestants were not meant to have any priests.

But we do find that most churches have a clergy, a separation between the clergy and the rest. People who seem to have some special status, some special relationship with God. So that when we, if we have a problem, we say, let's go to the man of God.

Let's ask him for a word from God. That we've not understood that each one of us as living stones are meant to be priests. Every single one.

This is our right as being children of God. We ought to live before him in holy fear, which means I come before him as a priest. I don't need any senior priest.

I only have one high priest, and that's Jesus. We are all priests. And it is our duty to daily offer sacrifices to God.

Not just any old sacrifices, but it says, offer up spiritual sacrifices to God that are acceptable to God. And you know, when you think about that word, spiritual sacrifice and acceptable to God, there's that other verse that we may know, Romans chapter 12, verse one, which says, in view of the mercies of God, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, which is your acceptable spiritual service of worship. So it's very clear that I come before God and I must seek to have the food of God's word.

Nourish me. That's one great mark of all children of God. And the other mark of the children of God is that we stand as priests daily offering sacrifices.

And our sacrifice is our body. And in our hearts, from the bottom of our hearts first, through our minds, through our emotions, into our actions, God says, I want worship. I want you to be a priest.

Don't go to anybody else. Don't stand on somebody else's priesthood. You have to be the priest.

And you have to daily offer sacrifices that are pleasing and acceptable to God. And the reason we won't do that is because we don't wanna obey. So just to refresh a couple of slides, I put a couple of slides from the previous time we spoke.

If you go to the next one. This was the old covenant tabernacle. And here's the new covenant tabernacle.

The most holy place and the holy place that was separated by a veil. And between our spirits or our hearts and our emotions and our minds is the will. And this is where we have to surrender our will daily, daily, always carrying about in our body the dying of Jesus.

Always carrying about in our body. Which means what Jesus did was he never did his own will. Never.

He always did the will of the Father. And so the next two slides talk about how it relates to in the picture of that house. When we build our house on our mind and our emotions, whatever we feel like doing or whatever we think is okay for us to do, we are like houses built on sand.

Because we don't obey. And obedience is a surrender of our will. My children are not tested in disobedience when I offer them chewing gum.

But when I offer them broccoli, that's when the will has to be tested. So in the same way our will is tested when they have to obey. And obedience is not when I want to do something I feel like doing or something that I think is okay to do, but when I don't feel like doing it, when my emotions are not agreeing with me, when the feelings of worry and anxiety and unforgiveness and the feelings of loving money come up, that's when God says blast your will.

How often? Always. I wanted to say this in closing. We must always offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

When is always? I want to make sure we all make this increasingly present in our hearts as we live. This has been such a transformative truth for me. 2018 is just a number.

It's not written in the Bible. There's nothing about 2018 in the Bible. There's no dates of my birthday or 2017 or 2018.

You know what day is written in the Bible? Today. Today is when always. Today.

Not tomorrow. Not Lord Jesus, I'll give up my pornography tomorrow. Lord Jesus, I'll give up my love of money tomorrow.

Just give me five more years until my bank account is fully retirable and then I'll give up my love of money. Until then, Lord Jesus, I'll continue to love money. No, Lord Jesus, even though I have to work now, even though I have to work to earn my bread, even though I do have financial metrics that I have, financial measurements of what is wise, stewardship of my money, Lord, even though I'm working, I want to hate the love of money.

And teach me, Lord, today. And I'm not worried about tomorrow. Tomorrow's not even promised, let alone 2020 or 2021.

Today, dear brothers and sisters, the choices are open before us to knock off the next giant in the land. You know what it is. For you, it may be different from me.

But today, you can. Today, you can choose to forgive that person you're not forgiving. Today, you can decide to die to the approval of men.

Today, you can decide to seek God, even for five minutes, to go to God and say, God, I want food. I want you to speak to me. I don't want to treat this as gum.

I want you to nourish me. And I'm not gonna look to my feelings for nourishment, but I want nourishment. I don't want to treat your word as things that blow up my mind or just make me feel good or smell good or look good.

I want to be nourished more in relationship to salvation for myself. I want to see meaningful progress in the days to come. I'm gonna take it one day at a time.

Today is the only day that matters. And I want to deal a death blow to the giants of the love of money. I, I tell you, I mean, I don't have any desire to, I don't have any thought that the love, let's say, just give an example, the lust of the eyes.

I have no thought in my mind that I'm gonna kill the lust of the eyes, which is the giant, because I'm gonna be tempted with lusting my eyes till the day I die. There's no promise that I'll get rid of that giant completely. That giant has many children.

It's been sitting in my body for years, and I fed him so with the love of money. But there's no promise that God says, hey, you can get rid of the giant completely. God just says the promise to them, every day, you can kill every one of those giants that come at you.

Every one of those children, you can defeat every one of them. Every one of them. You don't have to be defeated even once.

1 Corinthians 10, 13 says that. We know that. No temptation doesn't come without a way of escape.

So every giant of unforgiveness, lust of the eyes, anger, love of money, whatever it is, envy, jealousy, I can beat it today. I'm not worried about tomorrow. I'm not trying to have some big, top of the mountain victory over sin.

That giant is fully progressed. I'll never have to deal with it for the rest of my life. No such thing in my life.

So I'm not at all surprised when tomorrow, I get tempted again with the love of money. I just have to whack it again. I got to whip out my sword, which is the word of God.

I have to choose to go to God for nourishment. And then I have to deal with it a death blow. Always carrying about in my body, the blasting of my self-worth.

Always carrying in my body, saying, till the end of my life, I'm gonna have to blast my self-worth till you come. Then I will see you as you are. And then I will love you with unending heart.

Then I will be as you are. But until that day, Lord Jesus, I'm gonna put today in front of me and say every giant in the land, the next giant in the land, Lord Jesus, give me strength for today. And if you give me the breath for tomorrow morning, we'll start with your loving kindness, your great love over me.

And I'll pick up back my sword and fight the giants of today. May God help us.

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