

Discipleship and the New Covenant

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discipleship and the New Covenant, and highlights the need for a church that is strong on obedience to all of God's commandments and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 1:05:48

Scripture: Philippians 2:13, Hebrews 8:10-12

Topics: "New Covenant", "Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the transformation brought about by the New Covenant, focusing on God's promises to forgive sins completely, to be known as a loving Father, and to give the desire and ability to follow His will. It challenges listeners to open every area of their lives to God, seeking to live a life that pleases Him and expresses gratitude for His sacrifice.

Transcript

So brothers and sisters, I'm honored to stand here and share God's Word with you. The Apostle Paul would sometimes give his testimony, and we read at least twice in Scripture where his testimony is given at length. So I thought I would begin by sharing a bit about myself.

I've lived in India all my life and even now. And even though I was born into a family where my father knew the Lord, I was not converted until I was 19 years old. And by the time I joined the Indian Navy, as I was an officer in the Navy in India, when Christ laid hold of my heart, and it was a total, complete turning around to his life, and I was baptized a year later.

And I said, Lord, if you want me to quit my job, I'd be glad to do that, because I only want to live for you from now on. And I spent the next few years in the Navy. I was in the Navy altogether for about seven years after I was converted.

And I spent those years studying the Scriptures on my own. And the Lord opened my eyes to understand Scriptures and anointed me with a gift to preach his Word from a very young age. And then when I was 24, the Lord called me out to serve him.

And the Navy would not release me for a couple of years, but finally when I was 26, they released me and I came out. And for the last 46 years, I've been serving the Lord in India and initially traveling around a lot. But gradually, God began to open my eyes to see that there was more to Christianity than most Christians

had experienced.

See, in India, only about a little over 1% of the population are Protestant Christians. And out of that 1%, very few are really born again. So it's a very small percentage.

But it's not the percentage that's serious. I felt the quality of the Christians was so poor that it wasn't glorifying Christ in our land. So I never prayed that the percentage of Christians would increase in India.

Praise the Lord for the preaching of the gospel. But Christ gave us two commissions, and you've got to put them both together to get the Great Commission. One is in Mark 16, where he said, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

It means every human being, Mark 16, 15, every human being has to hear the gospel. And they must be taught the way of salvation. But then he also said that when we do go into all nations in Matthew 28, verse 19, I see this as two sides of the same coin.

And if you have a coin printed only on one side, it's a counterfeit. If you have a, what you call the Great Commission, which deals only with one side of it, which is Mark 16, and verse 15, preaching gospel and bringing people to Christ, it's a counterfeit gospel, because it's not preaching the full gospel, and not even the full Great Commission. Because the other Great Commission is, in Matthew 28, verse 19 and 20, it's the other half of the same thing, go into all nations and make disciples.

Now the disciple is different from just someone who's accepted Christ in order to go to heaven. The tragedy today is evangelism is only seeking to lead people to Christ to, so they don't go to hell, but go to heaven. But the Lord wants more than that.

He wants people who will follow him on earth and be a witness for him before they go to heaven. And so he said not only to make disciples, and he made the conditions of discipleship very clear in Luke 14, 25 to 33, these are the verses that we sought to follow. So as I was saying, this is what gripped us, and we saw it was not being done sufficiently, at least I saw it was not being done sufficiently.

I could hardly find a church as I traveled around the country that was proclaiming Matthew 28, verse 19 to 20, the conditions of discipleship, which is love Jesus more than father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, love Jesus more than all human beings. I mean, you couldn't say that the churches in India were having people who love Jesus more than any human being, number one. And yet that was the first condition of discipleship, Luke 14, 26.

The second condition of discipleship, Jesus said in Luke 14, 27, was to deny ourselves and take up the cross every single day. Churches in India were not being, not filled with people who were denying themselves and dying to themselves and living for Christ every day. And the third condition of discipleship, Luke 14, 33, was that they should love Jesus more than all earthly possessions.

They could have earthly possessions, but not be possessed by those possessions. And Christ must be loved more than every earthly thing. And certainly, I could hardly find many people in India who love Christ more than they love money.

So these were not disciples. They were people who were eager to go to heaven. Who doesn't want to go to heaven? But I saw that this part of the Great Commission was not being fulfilled.

And not only that, Jesus said, after making them disciples and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you must teach them to do every single thing I commanded you. That's beyond discipleship. And I looked around for churches that were teaching people, for example, that anger was equal to murder, Matthew 5, 22 to 24.

And that lusting after a woman was equal to adultery. That's the next few verses, verse 25 onwards in Matthew 5. Or that we were not only to love our friends, but we've got to love our enemies, too. This is teaching people to do everything Jesus commanded.

And that if we make a sacrifice for the Lord, like giving money or praying or fasting, nobody must know about it. And many things like this, many things that Christ commanded. For example, he said, every idle word that men will speak, Matthew 12, they will give an account in the day of judgment.

I found numerous things that Christ spoke. For example, if you don't forgive others, your heavenly Father will not forgive you. And these are almost like unknown verses for many Christians.

So I said, where are we fulfilling this great commission? I mean, there's a lot of evangelism, which is reaching out to people and telling them that you're on your way to hell, and you've got to turn from your sins, believe in Christ, he died for your sins, that's great. But that's only one side of the coin. So I said, well, I can't reach, India's got more than one billion people, and I can't reach all of them.

But certainly, I can do a little part in my one earthly life to make disciples, even if there's a few, so that we can, you know, stand before the Lord one day and say, Lord, we did all that you commanded to the best of our ability by the power of your Holy Spirit. So about 37 years ago, some of us, very few, we were about six or seven people started meeting in my home as a house church. And we decided that we would never seek to increase our membership at the cost of truth.

We'd preach the whole counsel of God, and if people got offended, they were welcome to go. But we were not going to lower God's standards in order to increase our numbers. And we've stuck to that till today.

But the Lord has brought to us those who were really eager to know all of God's truth. And the church grew, and we are about 400 now in Bangalore. And from there, we reached out to other parts, mostly the villages of India.

Most of our work is in small villages, and a lot of people have converted from different religions. And like that, over the last 30 years, God's planted about 40 churches from scratch, from nothing, in these villages. I mean, two of those churches are in villages, but there was never any church for 2,000 years from the time of Christ.

So we praise the Lord for what God has done. And we've decided continuously, we stick to our stand even till today, that we will preach the whole counsel of God. We're not free from the blood of all men until we proclaim the whole counsel of God.

A lot of people think, once I've told people that Christ died for your sins, and thereafter, it's up to him. I'm free from, his blood is not on my hands anymore. And yet, that expression, free from the blood of all men, was first used by the Apostle Paul in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 20, verse 26.

And he says it like this, Therefore, I testify to you that I'm innocent of the blood of all men, because, and he tells us, because for, I did not shrink from declaring to you, verse 27, the whole counsel or the whole

purpose of God. So when do I become free from the blood of all men? Not when I just told them Christ died for our sins, but when I proclaim the whole counsel of God, Acts 20, verse 26 and 27. When I've done that, I'm free from their blood.

After that, it's up to them, whether they accept it or not. So, when I thought of that, and I said, Lord, that's what I want to spend my life doing. And India is a massive country.

Bangalore itself has got a population of nine and a half million people. And India's got 1,000 billion, 1,000 million. How in the world am I going to spend in my one life, go looking for those who are really wanting to follow Jesus on earth, before they go to heaven? I mean, everybody in India wants to go to heaven.

But how many want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ before they go to heaven? That's a very small number. Lord, how shall I find them? And I thought I could spend all my life, and it'd be like looking for a few needles in a huge haystack of 1 billion people, 1.2 billion people. And I felt that I'd never be able to get very far.

But then I thought of, I mean, illustration-wise, if we could have a powerful magnet outside this haystack, it'd pull out those needles one by one, without ever plunging into the haystack. And that powerful magnet had to be a strong church that was like, you know, like these bright halogen lamps that they have on the streets, not just a weak, tiny light, but a powerful light or a powerful magnet that could pull out these needles from the haystack, those who really want to follow Jesus on earth. And that's the picture the Lord gave me, that that's the type of church you need to build, which is strong on discipleship, strong on obedience to all of God's commandments, big or small.

See, for me, I saw the commandments of God and the truth of scripture like the members of our body. And the life of Jesus was like the life in the body through the Holy Spirit. And we needed both.

Life was, of course, more important. There's no use having all doctrine and no life. That would be like a dead man who's got 10 fingers, 10 toes.

And a lot of churches like that where the doctrines are right, but they don't have the power of the Holy Spirit. They don't have a life of holiness and purity and love and humility. That's no use.

That's a dead man. And we don't want to be a dead church like that. We want a church full of life.

But at the same time, we want all of God's truth. We don't want to leave out small commandments, say that they are unimportant. Certainly, some commandments are more important than others, just like the heart is more important than the little finger.

But I didn't want... None of us want to cut off our little finger saying it's unimportant. So, we wanted all of God's truth, which is all of the members of the body. And the same time, life was more important.

I mean, if you were to ask me, is life more important than my little finger? Sure. If it's a choice, I'd rather have life and lose my little finger. But I don't have to have a choice.

I can have both. So, this was the emphasis we had. And as we looked at the New Testament and sought to study it, we saw that the early Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they had the power of the Holy Spirit to be able to live this life and to proclaim the truth of God in power.

And I felt that, as I looked around at Christendom, that here was one of the great truths of Scripture that had become a point of controversy with different Christian groups, where I wonder if there's any doctrine, other than the doctrine of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, that's caused more controversy in Christendom than perhaps any other doctrine. Maybe the deity of Christ is another doctrine like that. And as I sought to study the Scriptures, I saw that Jesus Christ was a perfect example of the Spirit-filled man.

And this controversy in Christendom on the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I said, we could find the answer in Jesus. What did he have? Did he have the fruit of the Spirit, or did he have the gifts of the Spirit? I see he had both. He had humility to wash the disciples' feet.

He had perfect love and compassion and absolute purity, a total sinless life. But he had that for 30 years. And then he was anointed, and he had the gifts of the Spirit to be able to cast out demons, to preach with power, etc.

So I saw that as I looked at Christ as our example, that he had both, and this is what I needed in my life too. And if it is a question of which is more important, I mean, that Christ made very clear in his life. He had the gifts of the Holy Spirit only for three and a half years, but he had the fruit of the Spirit for 33 and a half years, teaching us that the fruit was 10 times more important than the gifts, but not to neglect the other.

Both are important. So I found the great tragedy in Christendom is people get imbalanced and take things which are small and make it big. They major on minors, and that's what makes Christianity so ugly.

It's good to have two eyes. We want two eyes, but if one eye were six inches big and the other was just half an inch, they'd look pretty ugly. And that's why Christianity looks ugly when we take a small doctrine and make it very big and leave out the main thing.

For example, how do all Christians know that we're... How did Jesus say all people would know that we are his disciples? It's not by carrying a Bible with us. It's not by going to church every Sunday. It's not by speaking in tongues or healing the sick.

There was only one mark where Jesus said, he said, all men will know you are my disciples when you love one another. As I've traveled around many countries in the world, people ask me about my church, and they ask me all types of questions. Do you do this? And do you do that? And do you do that? Do you believe in this? Do you believe that? Nobody's ever asked me, do you love one another? And it looks as if it's very unimportant.

And yet that's the one thing Jesus said would mark his disciples. So there are many things like this, you know, which sound strange to us, and yet it's there in scripture. So let me share some of those strange things which are found in your Bible, which you may not have noticed.

For example, how many of you know the very first promise in the New Testament? The very first promise in the New Testament. We say we are New Testament Christians. We're not Old Testament followers of Moses and Israel.

Thank God for the Old Testament. But God has made a new covenant with man. And the first promise in the New Testament, in case you didn't know, it was Matthew 1.21. Let me read it to you.

It's the word that the angel Gabriel spoke to Joseph, and he said to him that his Mary would bear a son, and you will call his name Jesus. And here's the first promise. Why should you call his name Jesus? Because he will save his people from their sins.

That's the first promise in the New Testament. Jesus will save his people from their sins. There's no such promise in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament promises only that God would forgive their sins. That was true 1,000 years before Christ came. David says in Psalm 103, Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities.

Don't forget his benefits. The number one of his benefits is he forgives all your iniquities. So forgiveness of sins was something that David could talk about 1,000 years before Christ.

And he also said in Psalm 32 in verse 1, Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Psalm 32, 1. To whom the Lord will not impute iniquity. Psalm 32, 2. So those are not New Testament blessings.

Forgiveness of my sins. In fact, if you look at the benefits that David says in Psalm 103, here are four of those benefits mentioned in Psalm 103. One, he says, bless the Lord, don't forget any of his benefits.

Verse three, who pardons all your iniquities. Number two, he heals your diseases. He redeems your life from the pit.

That means he saves you from hell. And he crowns you, satisfies your years with good things. Verse five, blesses us in material things.

A gospel which proclaims these four things in Psalm 103, verse three to five. One, Christ forgives all your sins. Two, Christ heals your diseases.

Three, Christ saves you from hell. Four, Christ blesses you with material things, is an Old Testament gospel. It's from Psalm 103.

It's not from the New Testament. The New Testament is something which David could not mention. Yeah, he gives us all that.

Praise the Lord for all that. But he saves us from our sins. Not just forgives us, but saves us.

And there's a lot of difference between the two. You see, if my little boy, six years old, I tell him, don't go outside on the road, son, because they're digging a big pit there, and you may fall into it. And he disobeys me and goes and falls into that 10-foot pit.

And he cries out to me and say, daddy, daddy. And I run up to him and say, what happened? He says, I'm sorry, daddy, I disobeyed you. And he's down in that pit.

And I say, okay, son, I forgive you, goodbye. I've forgiven him. Have I saved him? No.

There's a difference between being forgiven and being saved. If I lose my temper, get angry and yell at someone or hurt him in some way, and I say, Lord, forgive me, he forgives, he confesses our sins, he's faithful and just to cleanse us. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

But then I go and lose my temper again next day with somebody else or three days later with someone else or I yell at my wife. Now, every single time I can sin 100 times a day and God will forgive me 100 times a day and cleanse me and make my heart clean. But can I say he saved me from anger? No, he's forgiven me.

Or say I lust after a woman or I look at pornography on the internet and I say, oh Lord, that's terrible, I'm sorry, forgive me. He forgives me. I can do it 10 times a day and forgive me 10 times a day.

But I do it again next week. Lord, forgive me. Has he saved me from it? No, he's forgiven me.

Then I must be honest and say Jesus is not my savior, he's my forgiver. We're not calling him by the right name. He hasn't saved you from anything.

He hasn't saved you from your temper. He hasn't saved you from internet pornography. He hasn't saved you from lusting after women.

He hasn't saved you from maybe an unforgiving spirit towards somebody else. He hasn't, the Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil. Has he saved you from that? Perhaps not.

What does he save you from? You say he saved us from hell. Well, the phrase saved from hell is never found in the New Testament. The first promise is not Jesus will save you from hell.

That's a word used by preachers. The first promise of the New Testament is he will save you from your sins. Distinctively New Testament feature because in the Old Testament, they could only be forgiven.

So they knew God as forgiver. If I know God only as forgiver, I'm living in the Old Testament, really. It's true that Christ shed his blood for our sins, but there's more to the gospel than that.

He came to save us. And the whole purpose of his giving us his Holy Spirit was to give us that inner power to be able to save us from sin, which has messed up our life. And, you know, God does not reveal these truths to us by study.

I'm not against Bible schools, but personally, I'm thankful I never went to a Bible school. Because I think it would have, you know, put me into a particular mold of theology, which they've already, there are different schools of theology and different Bible schools that I would have just been shaped into that school of theology. And I decided, I don't want to be in that school.

I don't want to have a preconceived idea of theology and pour every Bible verse and it all comes out the right shape. I wanted to have my mind poured into the shape of the Bible so that areas where my mind is not thinking right, it could be shaped like the New Testament shapes it. Now that required a lot of a battle to get rid of preconceived ideas and opinions from different people.

And I say, Lord, I want to come to the Bible with an open mind, then I'll get the best of it. And that's what changed my life. I'll tell you honestly, I was a defeated Christian for so many years of my Christian life after I was born again.

I was born again about 53 years ago. But for the first 16 years of those, my born again life, I was serving the Lord, but I was defeated in my inner life. I knew Jesus as forgiver, but not as savior.

That first promise in the New Testament, I did not experience. I couldn't say Jesus saved me from my sinful habits. Yeah, maybe external bad habits, some of them, but the more serious inner ones, he hadn't saved me from and I really wanted salvation.

Was there such a possibility for me? And I discovered in the New Testament there was. It says, Jesus said in Matthew 11, 25 once, concerning understanding the truth of scripture, Matthew 11, 25. He said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent, but you reveal them to babes.

Do you know that there is only one book in the world, only one book, which clever and intelligent people cannot understand, but babes can understand. Can you think of any book that anybody's written, which only babes can understand, but clever and intelligent people cannot understand. It's what Jesus said.

How is it possible to have a book that only babes can understand, but the clever and intelligent will not understand? Jesus said that. I thank you, Father, you've hidden these amazing truths from clever, intelligent people. Because, and that book is called The Book is the Bible.

Because when we try to understand a book with our mind, clever, intelligent people have a distinct advantage over babes. And the cleverer you are, the more you understand. I mean, you think of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

There are very few people in the world who can understand it or some complicated scientific problem. Very few people can understand it. Only clever people can understand it.

But when it comes to the Bible, your cleverness and intelligence doesn't give you any advantage at all. You got to be like a babe. Jesus said a babe is the closest to heaven on earth.

He picked up a babe and said, this is the greatest in God's kingdom. He said, if you humble yourself like this child, then you can enter God's kingdom. So humility is one characteristic of a babe.

And another characteristic of a babe is helpless dependence. I mean, little children can't live on their own. They're helplessly dependent on their parents.

That's another characteristic of a babe. And these have got spiritual applications. Helpless dependence where for everything they need to go to their dad or mom.

And so it's the person who comes like this. And another thing about a babe is it's ready to acknowledge that it knows almost nothing. What does a two-year-old or three-year-old know about the world? Zero.

It's willing to acknowledge it. It recognizes, I don't know. Dad's got to teach me.

So this humility and helpless dependence and acknowledgement that I don't know anything. If I come with that attitude to the Bible, I'll understand it. But if I come with all my cleverness and say, I'm going to analyze this and I'm going to use a concordance and compare this verse and that verse and the other verse and the other verse and I use my reason and get some lot of bright ideas.

Those bright ideas are not the revelation of the Holy Spirit. There's a lot of difference between bright ideas that we get from reading scripture and the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The revelation of the Holy Spirit will change my life.

Bright ideas are points I get for a sermon to preach to others. Or something you can share with others, you get some honor for it. Wow.

Where do you get that from? My clever brain. And you get some honor for your cleverness. But a revelation of the Holy Spirit, you know, revelation is a New Testament word.

You never find that word in the Old Testament. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he said in Ephesians 1:17, he said, I'm praying that God will give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. That the eyes of your heart will be enlightened, that you may know the hope of his calling.

So the eyes of our heart are different from the brain cells in my mind. God's word needs to enter into our heart. Very often, we keep it in our mind.

David said in Psalm 119, thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. If I keep God's word in my mind, I can still sin. But once it enters the heart, it keeps you from sin.

So a child is one who's got a pure heart. He's got purity, humility. The purest heart in the world is the heart of a little child.

And so what Jesus was saying is, I can't physically become a babe and I cannot intellectually try to become a babe, but I can have the attitude of a babe when I come to scripture. In other words, the purer your heart is, the more you will understand scripture. Not the cleverer your mind is.

The humbler your attitude is, the more you will understand the scripture. The more you're willing to acknowledge that you know nothing about God, the more you will understand scripture. These are some of the characteristics of a little babe, humility and purity of heart and helpless dependence and acknowledging that I know nothing.

So that's the meaning of it. Thank you that you've hidden these things from people who are so proud of their cleverness and intelligence and Bible knowledge and reveal them to those who've come in humility. So I want to say that to you, dear brothers and sisters, that's the way to study the scriptures.

And I spent 50 years studying the scripture. And whenever I come to scripture, I say, Lord, I don't know. Even though I've studied it for 50 years, there are things you still have to show me.

And I tell you the truth. God gives me a revelation even now. It's like a well in which the water never dries up.

You can always get something new from the same verse. It's really amazing. And anybody can have it.

Which of us cannot become like a babe in our attitude to scripture? I mean, in my worldly business, I need to use intelligence and my cleverness. We need that in the world. For everything in the world, you need to use your cleverness and intelligence.

But I tell you this, dear brothers and sisters, when you come to the things of God, that will not help you. It requires humility. The Pharisees were far cleverer than Peter.

They had studied the scriptures. It says they studied the scriptures every Sabbath. And they studied it from Genesis to Malachi.

Every single book spoke about Christ, the Messiah coming to earth. Right from the promise in Genesis 3 of the seed of the woman, bruising the serpent's head all the way to Malachi, the son of righteousness will arise. It's all about Christ.

But these Pharisees, when they studied it, studied it, studied it, when the Messiah came into their midst, you know what they called him? Beelzebub, prince of devils. How blind can you be to study the scriptures which speak about Jesus as the Messiah? And when he comes into your midst, you call him the prince of devils. And Jesus asked his disciples, okay, these fellas call me prince of devils.

Who do you say that I am? Even some of the God-fearing people thought he was maybe Jeremiah or Elijah. But Peter said, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus said, you're blessed, Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you.

In other words, you didn't discover this with your human cleverness. You're not the cleverest guy in Israel to know that I am the Messiah. But my father in heaven revealed this to you, that word revelation.

And he said, on this revelation, I will build my church on this rock. The gates of hell will never prevail against it. It was that revelation that came to Peter because of his humility and acknowledging that he did not know that spirit of a babe and that's so important.

Let me share with you from Hebrews in chapter 8. In Hebrews chapter 8, we need to come with humility to this passage of scripture because it's fundamental to living a New Testament life. We all know that God made a covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai through Moses. But the Bible says Jesus used another phrase at the Last Supper.

It's the only time he used it. When he passed the cup around, he said, this is my blood of the new covenant. That was a new covenant being established in his blood.

In Hebrews 13, it's called the blood of the everlasting covenant. There is not going to be a third covenant. This is the final one, an everlasting one.

The old covenant was established the sprinkling of blood of the bulls and goats. And if you want to know the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, it's the difference between the blood of bulls and goats and the blood of Jesus Christ. Vast difference.

And it's impossible to even describe it. And yet my conviction is that the vast majority of Christians are living under the old covenant. I told you what the old covenant offered, forgiveness of sins.

Healing from diseases, salvation from hell, escape from the pit and material blessing. How many Christians have you found who want more than that? Forgiveness of sins, you don't go to hell, healing from diseases and material prosperity. That satisfies most Christians in the world.

I mean, even born again ones. But the new covenant in the blood of Jesus goes beyond that. It means salvation from sin.

And here in Hebrews 8, it says, Jesus Christ, verse 6, has obtained a more excellent ministry than Moses. Moses is referred to in verse 5. He has obtained a more excellent ministry in that he's the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. And if that first covenant, the one made with Moses, was flawless, there would have been no need for a second.

You know that that verse teaches us that the first covenant was faulty? Did God establish a covenant that was faulty? It was God who established the first covenant. I mean, it's not that God made a mistake and it's like some, you know, car maker that produces a better model having learned from the mistakes of the first one. It's not like that.

What it means is it was faulty in this sense that it could not lead people to where God wanted man to be. And God knew that right from the time he gave the law. The law was never meant to save anybody.

It couldn't save anyone. The law was like a mirror which shows me my sin. I need a mirror.

Why we all have mirrors in our bathrooms because without that mirror, I can't see the dirt on my face. But to remove that dirt, I don't use the mirror. I need soap to remove the dirt on my face.

So the law could not cleanse your sin. It could only show you just like a mirror. Very important.

But it could show you the seriousness of sin. And that's why Israel more than any other nation on earth knew the seriousness of sin. But they didn't know how to be delivered from it.

God in his mercy forgave them. But they didn't know deliverance. And that was where the fault was.

It could not deliver people from sin. It could show them their sin. God in his mercy could overlook it, forgive them.

But he couldn't save them from it. So it's faulty. And so, and it's not that God, as I said, God didn't make a mistake.

But God had to bring salvation in two stages. First, by giving the law and then Christ coming and bringing grace. Because until man was convinced of the seriousness of his sin, he was not going to look for a savior.

You know, I see this in, my wife is a medical doctor. She spent 44 years freely serving the poor in India. And when we go down to the conferences in the villages, she has clinics for these poor women and children who can never afford to go to a doctor, free clinics.

And I've thought of this in relation to, if you tell one of those women there, old, illiterate women, you got cancer. You know, that woman won't even be disturbed. Not one bit.

Oh, cancer, is it? Okay, fine. When do I get over it? She's not educated. She doesn't know what cancer is.

She thinks maybe it's like a cough or a cold or something. I'll get over it in a couple of days. But if a doctor told you that you had cancer, you wouldn't sleep that night.

You'd do something about it. That's the difference between education and illiteracy. Now, apply that spiritually.

When, if God's word tells you that lusting after women is a serious sin, oh, it's okay. I can be forgiven. That's the spiritually illiterate person.

It's like that woman. She's not disturbed that she's got cancer. And you're not disturbed that you lust after women.

Or you say that anger is serious. Serious enough to take you to hell. You say, it's okay.

We all get angry. We somehow get over it. That's spiritual illiteracy.

Exactly like that woman who's not disturbed by cancer. You can go and tell that woman she's got AIDS. She would still sleep peacefully at night.

AIDS, oh, that's okay. I find exactly the same attitude among Christians towards sin. It's spiritual illiteracy.

What does that woman need? She needs education on how serious cancer is and how it can be treated about chemotherapy and things like that that can free her from that cancer. And that's what Christians need. All cancer cannot be cured, but all sin can be freed from.

Jesus came to save his people from their sins. So that's the reason why God gave a first covenant to show us the seriousness of sin. And I tell you, Christians need to hear that, how serious sin is.

I have one definition. It's my own definition of one mark of a spiritual man. It's not the only mark, but one mark, as I've observed Christians in my own life through many years, I've said one mark of a spiritual man is that he fears sin more than sickness.

He's more afraid of what sin can do in his life than what sickness can do in his life. He's more afraid. I mean, he wants to avoid dirty thoughts more than he wants to avoid cancer or AIDS.

Are you spiritual? Do you hate dirty thoughts, dirty sexual thoughts? You hate anger, bitterness and unforgiving spirit more than you hate AIDS and cancer. Brother, you are a spiritually minded man. I can tell you that.

But if you're more disturbed by the fact that you got AIDS or cancer than by the fact that you sin in your thoughts and in your words and in your attitudes to people. I mean, there's hope for you, but I'd say you're carnal. You need to become spiritual.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians and saying, you're carnal, folks. I know you're born again, Corinthians, but you're carnal. And that's because you're babes.

Babes are illiterate. I mean, you tell a three-year-old you got cancer. He doesn't know.

He's not bothered. Little babies have got AIDS also. Unfortunately, in the world today there are babies born with AIDS sometimes.

But what is that three-year-old you tell that three-year-old you got AIDS? It's not disturbed. It's illiterate. So the Corinthians were carnal.

They didn't realize the seriousness of sin. And you read the letter to the Corinthians and find all types of sins were going on there and they didn't realize the seriousness of it. That's why they were carnal.

And that's why they were babes. And that's the mark of a carnal babe. So when we look at Hebrews chapter 8, God, you know, established a new covenant so that he could solve this problem which the law exposed.

And he said, this is a new covenant that I'm going to make. And today the house of Israel is us, the church, the Israel of God. He said, this is the covenant that I'll make with them.

And there are three things mentioned here. And I just want to mention these three things briefly to you. These are the three terms or the three promises.

Let's say the promises of the new covenant which were not there in the Old Testament times. And we need to understand these three very well. Number one, I want to start at verse 12.

I will be, Hebrews 8, 12, I will be merciful to their iniquities and I'll remember their sins no more. We got to begin there. It's a complete clearing of our past record of sin, the many things we have done that God detests.

I will be merciful to their sins and iniquities. I will remember their sins no more. That's more than forgiveness.

He doesn't just promise to forgive. There's no promise in the old covenant that I will not remember your sins anymore. In fact, in Hebrews, it says, every time they offered the sacrifice, there was a constant remembrance of sin.

Do you know that you don't have to remember the sins you have confessed to God? I remember the first time that hit me about one and a half years after I was born again. I still cannot forget that day. I was standing on the deck of a ship where I was working and I'd already been born again and baptized, but I was constantly tormented by the thoughts of past failure and the devil would make me confess my sin again and again and again and again as if God was hard of hearing and I had to keep on telling him, yeah, Lord, I did that and I did that and I did that.

I've already said that 10 times and probably a hundred times and the devil would say, no, you did that, you did that and that was right. But I was never sure that God had forgiven me and it's blotted out. And perhaps there are some people sitting here like that.

You know, maybe some, maybe the small sins you say God's forgiven, but that terrible thing you did 20 years ago, or that terribly wicked thing you did 10 years ago, it keeps on coming to your mind or that wretched thing you did and it keeps coming to your mind, keeps coming to your mind and the devil tortures you with it and you hinders your spiritual growth. In the Old Testament, there was no promise that I will not remember your sins anymore. They always felt God remembers my sins and every time I come before him, he says, if God looks at me and says, yeah, I know what you did five years ago and I know what you did 10 years ago a lot of Christians will feel when they come before God now, as if God says to them, yeah, I know all about you.

I know what you did last week. You're daring to come before me. It's a wonderful promise.

I will not remember their sins anymore. I remember that day when that burden was lifted from me and the Lord just reminded me of this verse and I was free. That's the meaning of justification.

Justification is more than forgiveness. Forgiveness is, okay, God says I forgive you but justification is I look at you as if you've never sinned in your life. You have sinned but I look at you as if you have never sinned.

I mean, isn't it a wonderful thing to be able to stand before God and to know that he looks at me as if I've never sinned in your whole life. Think of yourself, my brother, sister. Think if from the day you were born till today, you had never committed one sin, never committed one sin in thought, word, deed, attitudes to

people, in your motives with which you did things.

You're absolutely pure. Say, boy, I wish I could be like that. I wanna say that's the message of the gospel.

That's what the blood of Jesus Christ does. When it says in Romans 5, 9, we are justified by his blood. That means more than we are forgiven by the blood of Christ, more than cleansed.

Justified means just as if I'd never sinned. He will not remember my sins anymore. It's absolutely liberating.

It was for me anyway. The devil couldn't harass me anymore with memory of my past failures. I didn't realize it that when I was doing that, I was actually exalting my sin above the blood of Christ.

That my sin was so terrible that I had to probably confess it 10 times before the blood of Christ cleansed me. It's a lie. 1 John 1, 9 says, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That is God's word. And the blood of Christ justifies me. My past is gone.

And I want to say to everyone here, I hope you'll be liberated. If you haven't already been, you will be liberated. That you're liberated this morning as you believe the truth of God's word.

Faith brings deliverance from the torment of Satan who's the accuser of the brethren, always accusing them. And it says they overcame him by the blood of the lamb. And that is by recognizing the blood has taken care of my past.

And of course, people can take advantage of it. I mean, the world is full of people who take advantage of God's goodness and say, oh, the blood cleansed me, then I can sin again. Then I wonder whether God has given you a new heart.

You see, the difference between a born again person and sinning and an unbeliever sinning, there's a lot of difference. A believer can also sin. Sure.

To me, the difference is like the difference between a pig and a cat. Pigs fall into dirty water. Can cats fall into dirty water? Sure, why not? But there's a lot of difference when they both fall into dirty water.

The pig sort of enjoys it and says, this is great, this muck. I love this muck. And, you know, splashes around in a bit.

What does a cat do when it falls in dirty water? It not only jumps out immediately. Boy, you should see that cat for the next few minutes. It's just licking itself clean.

And Indian cats, Canadian cats, they're all the same. They lick themselves clean. So whether you're born again in India or Canada, if you're really born again, this is what happens.

So I tell people, my question is not whether you sin. My question is, after you sin, what do you do? That tells me whether you're a pig or a cat. Because pigs and cats both fall into dirty water.

And believers and unbelievers can both fall into sin. But what's your reaction when you fall? Is there an immediate sorrow? Oh, I've dishonored the Lord. I want to set it right.

Lord, forgive me. And you ask forgiveness from the person you hurt. You're born again.

The Lord's done a work in you. What's the difference between a pig and a cat? It's nature. It's not instruction.

You know, a cat doesn't teach its little kittens, hey, you guys got to be clean. Remember, you can't be like pigs. There's no instruction.

It's just nature. It's born with a nature that hates filth. And when I see a cat sitting there and licking itself, I say, I don't see any dirt in it, but it's still licking itself.

It's got a tremendous love for cleanliness, which is the exact opposite of a pig. And I say, that's the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. So I may fall, but I hate it.

And when I do fall, I come to Christ and I'm cleansed. And the Lord says, I will not remember your sins anymore. That's a wonderful promise, number one.

Number two, it says in Hebrews 8 and verse 11, they will not teach everyone their fellow citizens saying, know the Lord, but all shall know me from the least to the greatest. So in the Old Testament, they only knew him as God. But now, all shall know me means they'll know me as I really am, that is a father.

God is a father. And nobody in the Old Testament knew him like that. Nobody in the Old Testament could look up to God and say, dad, dad.

You couldn't call him dad in the Old Testament. But it says in the New Testament, and the Holy Spirit comes in, the Holy Spirit cries out within us, Abba, Father and Abba. I'm sorry to say that the guys did not translate it, unfortunately, in Hebrews, I'm sorry, Romans 8, 15.

The Spirit cries out, Abba, Father. An accurate translation of Abba would be daddy. That's the English word, Abba is Hebrew.

I don't know why they didn't translate it. They wondered whether it was reverent to call God dad. But that's what it means.

If you were speaking Hebrew, you want to translate dad, it would be Abba. So that's what it means, the Spirit of God comes within us and makes us cry out, dad. Isn't it wonderful to have a dad in heaven? Not a CEO of the universe.

It's like working in a factory where you're working in a factory with 10,000 workers or 100,000 workers and the CEO on top. Can you ever get to meet him? I mean, you apply for a meeting with him and he goes through all the procedure of red tape, etc. And finally, maybe after two, three months, you get to speak one minute to him.

But what about that CEO's son? The little five-year-old boy, he just walks into his dad's office and say, hey, dad, I want to chat with you. Dad's got to listen to him. That's the difference between being an employee and a son.

And God doesn't want you to be an employee. He wants you to be a son. He wants you to live with that privilege of being a son and a daughter who can walk right up to him.

He always has time for you. The CEO of the factory doesn't always have time for you. He's got many things to do, but he's got time for his children.

And it's another wonderful thing I see here in the New Covenant. It's wonderful. You know, I find that a lot of people when they pray, they say, Lord, Lord, Lord.

It's right. There's nothing wrong in praying in the New Testament. Also, there are prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus.

But remember, Jesus said, when you pray, say, Father. And I like that. So I also pray saying, Lord, many times.

But most of the time, I pray, Father and Dad. I have a problem, Dad. Can you help me? Just like my little children would come to me when they were small.

Dad, my toy is broken or my little toy car is not working. Can you fix it for me? What would I do? I would do as much as I could for them. But I got a heavenly dad who can fix every problem.

I can go to him with small things. I mean, my little children didn't come to me only after some major calamities when they had broken their bones or something like that. They'd come to me with small, teeny, weeny things.

And that teaches me that I can go to my heavenly dad for the smallest little problem. Dad, I can't find my keys. Where did I leave them? Do you ever think of talking to your dad about things like that? It's a wonderful thing to know God as your father.

Many Christians don't know it. They know God as almighty God, ruler of the universe. He is.

But he's also your dad if you're born again, if you made Christ your savior. And the other thing it says in verse 11 is from the least to the greatest. That's an expression you don't find in the world.

Hebrews 8, 11. In the world, it's always the greatest to the least. I mean, if you go to a function to meet the governor general or something, well, the greatest would go in first, right? And the least would, may not even have a place there.

But it's not like that in God's kingdom. Everything is opposite in God's kingdom. It's from the least to the greatest.

Because this is a family. It's like a family with dad sitting at the head of the table and number of children. And here's the 15-year-old.

And here's that little two-year-old girl sitting there at the end of the table. And they all want to talk to dad. And dad says, well, all of you keep quiet.

I want to hear the two-year-old first. You 15-year-old can take your turn later on. From the least to the greatest.

Do you think God will, people say, oh, brother Zain, you're so mature in God. He listens to you. I was just born again yesterday.

I'll tell you, he listened to you first. It's from the least to the greatest. Do you believe that? You see how you get a new Bible as you read the Bible carefully? We have missed out on so much because we haven't read God's word carefully.

The third thing. Yeah, let me, before I go on, they shall not teach everyone. In other words, all of us can know God personally.

You don't need, God has appointed teachers in the church. And that teachers are to teach you the scripture. The doctrines and the truths of scripture like I'm doing now.

But to know God as your dad, you don't need anybody to teach you. The Holy Spirit himself cries out dad and you can know him personally and walk with him as your heavenly father every day. And the third most wonderful promise here in verse 10, Hebrews 8 10.

I will put my laws into their minds and I will write them in their hearts. I'll put my law into their mind. I will write my law upon their heart.

In the Old Testament also, Moses had two tablets of stone on which God wrote his laws. Rock on which he wrote. But he couldn't write in people's minds and hearts because the minds of hearts were harder than rock.

And Moses came, brought the commandments on two tablets of stone. And now the Lord says, it's not going to be in those external tablets. I'm going to write them inside your mind.

These are the tablets now, your mind and your heart. And the meaning of that is, I'm going to give you, putting it in your mind means I'm going to give you a desire to keep my laws, to do my will, to keep my commandments. God's going to give me that desire.

He's going to put it in my mind. And putting it in the heart means he's going to give me the ability to keep it. I not only need the desire, I need the ability too.

If I just have the desire, I don't have the ability, I'll be frustrated. But he gives me a desire to do his will in the midst of a world where people don't want to do his will. And then he gives me the ability to do it.

Wonderful. This is the New Covenant and God says, I will do it. I don't know whether you've noticed here in the New Covenant, the onus is entirely on God.

He says, I will be merciful. Verse 12, I will remember their sins no more. And all shall know me and I will put my laws in their minds and I will write them on their hearts.

God says, I'll do it. You've got to just let me do it. That's all.

In the Old Covenant, it was not like that. Look at the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shalt.

That's the Ten Commandments. It's all changed in the New Covenant where God says, I will, I will. You tried to keep the law.

You couldn't do it. I'll do it now. I will put my Holy Spirit within you, fill you with my Holy Spirit.

You'll have the desire and ability to do my will. This is also mentioned in other words in Philippians 2 and verse 13. God is at work inside us.

And whenever you read in the New Testament that God is work inside us, it's always referring to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one dwelling in us. Every born again person has a spirit within him.

And if he yields himself completely to this spirit, he'll be filled with the Holy Spirit. Many born again people are not filled with the Holy Spirit because there's some rooms in their heart they haven't opened up to the Holy Spirit. But if you allow the Holy Spirit to occupy every part of your life, you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's very simple. If you don't have the Spirit of Christ, you're not even born again. When we are born again, the Spirit of Christ comes in.

But it's like I've allowed him to come into one room of my heart called the guilt room. I feel terribly guilty about my past life and I want Christ to forgive me. And he comes right in and floods that room with light and all my guilt is gone.

But there are other rooms in my heart. And the Lord knocks it. I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I stand there. And the Lord says, can I come into your television room and control what you watch on television? And you say, Lord, not there. Some things I watch which you may not like.

Can I come and look through all the DVDs you have in your house? It's another room. Can I look through all the music you listen to? You say, Lord, it may embarrass me if you look through that. So just keep out of that room.

And the Lord says, what about this other room? Can I come and look at your finances? How you're handling your money, whether you're righteous and everything, whether you're earning righteously and doing everything righteously, paying your taxes, etc. And the Lord says, you say, I don't want you to come in there because, you know, we've got to live in this world. We've got to do a few unrighteous things.

So you may not approve of some of the things I do. Okay, I won't come in. He's a gentleman.

He never comes into a room in which you don't open. But you always invite him to the guilt room. Is the Spirit of God in you? Yes.

Has he filled you? No. You're not filled with the Spirit. What's the reason? Is it because God is reluctant? No.

You don't want him to come into certain areas of your life. Because you think he won't give you freedom to do things. You don't realize that things you're doing are destroying you.

He'll give you freedom to do everything which is good for you. So dear brothers and sisters, it's we who are hindering ourselves from being filled with the Holy Spirit. You don't have to wait on God.

God's waiting on you. It's like sunlight. If you draw the blinds, the sunlight doesn't come in.

But if you open one little blind, the sunlight comes rushing in. The Holy Spirit's just waiting to come and fill us. God is at work in you, Philippians 2.13, to do two things.

To write his law on our mind and our heart. It's written in different words here. To will his good pleasure and to do his good pleasure.

To, he gives us the desire to do his will and the ability to do his will. That is the opposite of sinning. Sinning is to not do his will.

He comes to save us from sin by giving us the desire to do his will and the ability. So what I want to encourage you all is to open your heart and say, Lord, I know you desire the best for me. I want to open every area of my life.

I have only one life to live and I want to spend my life doing your will. Give me that desire and give me that ability to do that so that I can live a worthwhile life on earth and express my gratitude thereby for all that you did for me on the cross before I see you one day face to face. We're going to see him one day very soon.

I hope you won't have any regrets in that day. About what you live for. This grips me.

I mean, for more than 50 years, this has gripped me. Lord, I don't want to just go to heaven. When I see you and I see you the embodiment of love and I see how much you love me when I see you face to face, I don't want to have any regret about what I live for on earth.

I want to have lived to please you and to express my gratitude. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Our Father, as we are bowed in prayer before you, I believe there are a number of people here who are sincerely longing for the very best that you have for them.

I pray that they will not allow this word to be taken out of their hearts until it's fulfilled in their lives. Father, work in the lives of many. Bring them to this wonderful new covenant life.

Pray in Jesus name. Amen. Thank you very much.

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