

God's Highest Purpose For Us In The New Covenant

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God personally and partaking of His nature in our lives. It highlights the need to fall into the ground and die to self, bearing much fruit, rather than seeking to impress others or be influenced by worldly recognition. The ultimate goal is to have the beauty of the Lord upon us and to long for eternal life by knowing God intimately.

Scripture: John 17:3, 2 Peter 1:3, Psalms 90:17, John 12:24, John 12:26

Topics: "Intimacy with God", "Dying to Self"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God personally and partaking of His nature in our lives. It highlights the need to fall into the ground and die to self, bearing much fruit, rather than seeking to impress others or be influenced by worldly recognition. The ultimate goal is to have the beauty of the Lord upon us and to long for eternal life by knowing God intimately.

Transcript

In NCCF and in all our CFC churches, you know that we emphasize the new covenant, but through the years I have seen that one of the main problems in a Christian's life is being imbalanced, not only in this area but in many many other areas. There is a balance in truth and there's a balance in the universe there's a balance in the solar system, there's a balance in our body where the left side is exactly symmetrical to the right side so we don't look ugly. So in all of nature that symmetry, there's a balance and like it says the glory of God was seen full of grace and truth, there's a balance there in Jesus.

And in this understanding of the new covenant as well, it's very important to see that there's a need for us to have a balanced understanding of it. See sometimes when we find a lack in one area, we tend to measure on that and forget about other parts of our life which are more other parts of the new covenant which are more important. So let me turn you to where the new covenant is actually spoken of most clearly in Hebrews chapter 8. Hebrews chapter 8 we read in verses 10 11 and 12.

And this is contrasted with the old covenant. We've come to this passage many times, this is not new to any of you if you've heard me before. And it says in verse 8, finding fault with the first covenant.

It says in verse 7, if the first covenant had been faultless, there'd be no need for a second covenant. That is one of the clearest verses that tells us that the old covenant was faulty. So turn with me here to what it says, I will make a new covenant and it's not going to be like verse 9, the covenant I made with their fathers.

And this is the new covenant, verse 10. And there are three things mentioned here. And then in verse 13 he says, when he says a new covenant, he has made the first obsolete.

Now we all know that we are not under the Old Testament. But the spirit of the Old Testament I find still lingers in many Christians, in many Christians and CFC churches, even though they know we are not under the Old Covenant, that spirit of the Old Testament still lingers. The spirit of the Pharisee, for example.

The Old Covenant produced Pharisees. Pharisees were people who knew the Bible very well. They were scribes.

Scribes were Bible scholars. They didn't have a life, but they knew the Bible. They could expound the Bible.

And the Pharisees were very righteous externally, but not inwardly. And that's what Jesus spoke about the outside of the cup being clean, but not the inside. So we have to see that the first people under the Old Covenant are not, in the eyes of men, they were not bad people.

They were pretty upright. And we can be pretty upright on the outside and still be under the Old Covenant. But it says in verse 13, he has made the first obsolete and he's got rid of it.

So I must not only realize that I'm not under the Old Covenant, but there must not be a smell of anything Old Covenant in me. No smell of the scribe who gloried in his Bible knowledge and without any life to back it up. He was not a disciple.

Not any smell of the Pharisee who looked down on people who didn't know the Bible like him, or who were sinners in the, you know, despised. So if you look at the terms of the New Covenant here, there are three things. And we'll begin with the last one, which is really the first, verse 12.

I will be merciful to the iniquities. I'll remember their sins no more. So this is the first thing.

When we come to the Lord, we have a past to deal with, a past that is bad, very bad, terribly bad, whatever it is, it makes no difference. We come to the Lord, we're all sinners to a greater or lesser degree. And it says here that he will not remember our sins anymore.

That means that not only it's forgiven. In the Old Testament, there was a remembrance of sins all the time. If you turn to Hebrews chapter 10, it's said very clear.

This is one of the distinctive features of the Old Covenant. And this is where I said the remnants of the Old Covenant can still be with us. Hebrews chapter 10, it says here, verse three, in the Old Testament sacrifices, there's a reminder of sins year by year.

I want you to answer this question to yourself honestly. Do you keep remembering with a sense of condemnation the sins that you've committed in the past? You've got to answer that to yourself. That's a mark of Old Covenant Christianity.

To remember our sins and to be grateful that the Lord has forgiven us and cleansed us and made us new creatures, that is a good thing. Because second Peter one says that if you don't remember your sins like that, you will not be able to progress. You'll become spiritually blind, it says in second Peter one.

Look up that verse sometime. If you forget your cleansing from your past, you can become spiritually blind. No, we don't want to forget the fact that we are cleansed.

Paul never forgot. In fact, many times it comes out in his letters that he was one who persecuted Christians and troubled them. And he calls himself the chief of sinners.

But this reminder of the past that brings condemnation must be zero. A reminder of the past which brings gratitude to God and a tremendous sense of thankfulness and a tremendous sense of oh, I owe God so much, that is good. But any other remembrance of the past is Old Covenant.

In those sacrifices, Hebrews 10.3, there's a reminder of sins year by year by year. How has it been with your own life? If you're converted 10 years, 20 years, every year. Has there been times when you condemn yourself for your past life? You have to finish with it.

Remember your past sins only to be grateful to God, but never allow a speck of condemnation to come into your life. Because that is Old Covenant. That means you don't believe, either you don't believe the blood of Christ was sufficient to take care of all your sins, or you don't believe it when God says, I don't remember it anymore.

It's not that God has forgotten our past. How can God forget our past when we ourselves don't forget our past? You've got to understand it properly. God doesn't say, I forget about your past.

God's memory is perfect. He knew before the worlds were created all that we're going to sin. And for all eternity, God's mind doesn't change.

He knows every single sin we committed. He doesn't say, I won't, I've forgotten. He says, I choose not to remember.

I will not remember. It's a deliberate choice. I will.

It's a will of God. I will. I choose not to remember any of your sins.

I'll be merciful. That's one thing. God was merciful in the Old Covenant too, Hebrews 8, 12.

But now more than that, he chooses not to remember. And that is why we are declared righteous in Christ. Now this may be very elementary for some of you, but if you still feel condemnation, you need to hear it again.

I'll tell you when you never need to hear a message on justification. When you can come to the place where you say, I have zero condemnation about my past life, then you don't need to hear about justification anymore, because you're convinced that in Christ you are justified. But until then you've got to keep hearing.

It's like a student who still hasn't understood multiplication. Well, you've got to keep on practicing multiplication until you learn it. You can't go on to higher subjects.

So only when you're absolutely convinced that Christ has come, the blood of Christ has taken care of every single sin of yours. This is not, this is very elementary, but many of you need to hear it. And you young people especially.

If you have really repented, that means not you've given up your sins, but you want to turn away from your sins. Do you want to turn from all the wretched evil things you have done in the past and all the wretched evil things you see in your own system? I'm not asking whether you will give it up. I'm asking, do you hate it? And do you want to give it all up? That's repentance.

Then you can be sure that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from every single sin. This is the meaning of walking in the light. You come into God's presence, say, Lord, I don't want to hide anything.

And you can be absolutely sure that you're not only cleansed, but Romans 5, 9 says declared righteous by the blood of Christ, which is just as if all those things you did in the past, you never did. The blocking out is so complete. And just as if from day one of your Christian life, day one of your life, you are a righteous person.

That is the first element of the new covenant. It is the foundation. You have to be founded on this and don't lay your foundation here and go and build your house somewhere else.

No, that's what a lot of people do. They say, I got it. I lay the foundation here.

The rest of their life, they go and build their house somewhere else. Again, they get into condemnation. So I hope once for all, you'll be clear on this today.

And if not, ask God to make it clear to you. This is a very important part of the new covenant. It's the price that Jesus paid for us.

And you think of the tremendous price he paid of not only the physical agony of dying on the cross, but suffering eternal hell for three hours so that we might never be condemned. Then you see the price he paid to bring us to this place and let's value it. Let's value the price.

It's very high. More than silver and gold, 1 Peter 1 says. Okay.

Then I want to go to verse 10, which is usually the next thing we go to. Because we've been so defeated by sin, many people remain in this foundation part, verse 12, forever. They never get past that.

Say, thank you, Lord. I'm justified. My sins are forgiven.

Most Christians, most born again Christians remain there. And the result is very often they lose their salvation and become children of hell once again. Twofold children of hell.

They were children of hell earlier and they got born again and they lost their salvation because they played the fool with sin. So here there's a danger if we don't move on to seeking to overcome sin. And that's what we have emphasized in the new, in NCCF and all CFC churches, that sin will not have dominion over you.

Romans 6, 14, because you're not under law, but under grace. We taught people, Jesus was tempted like you. He received grace from the father and you can receive the same grace to overcome every day.

And like the giants in Canaan were killed one by one. You can overcome sins in your life, sins that you were slave to for years, one by one, not all of a sudden, all the giants were not killed in one day. The picture is so beautiful.

So that is where we move on to second stage, but it's not just overcoming sin. You know, we can think of sin as a negative thing. I fight it and I overcome it and I kill that giant.

Fine. But in Hebrews 10, it's put in another way, in a positive way. Overcoming sin is like a negative thing.

This wretched anger of mine, the sexual lust. I hate it. I'm fed up with it.

And one day I overcome it. I said, wow, what a victory. But that's not all.

The first verse 10 does not speak about victory over sin. It speaks about victory over sin in another way, in a positive way. Not I will give them victory over sin.

Not I will help them to overcome their anger, but I will put my law into their mind and write them in their heart. That's not just overcoming anger and sexual lust. It is making my mind and my heart pure, writing God's law.

God's law is the most perfect thing in this universe. Absolute purity. And however much you struggle and overcome sin, et cetera.

For example, I'll tell you, there was a brother who came to our church. We were from a Hindu background. We used to do yoga in his Hindu days.

And you know what he said when he came to us? He said, you guys talk about overcoming anger. I overcame anger when I was a Hindu doing yoga. I could control my tongue.

I overcame anger. It was a shame to so many Christians who lose their temper. This guy overcame it with Hindu yoga.

Then I had to tell him, listen, Christ doesn't give us victory over speaking angry words. That's not all. It goes deeper.

Anger, Ecclesiastes says, dwells in the heart of a fool. That's where Christ delivers us from anger. And yoga can never deliver a person from anger in the heart.

It's just controlling the tongue. Controlling the tongue doesn't mean overcoming anger. If you lock up all the snakes inside a box, it doesn't mean there are no snakes in your house.

They're just locked up. They're there. So the fact that it doesn't come out doesn't prove anything.

The fact that no snakes come out of the door of your house doesn't mean there are no snakes inside. So we must not deceive ourselves that anger is not, and I want to say that to you believers as well, don't be satisfied that you control your anger finally. That you don't yell at your wife anymore.

You don't yell at your husband anymore. If you get satisfied with that, that's why you'll stop. You'll stop where the Hindu yogi stops.

You've got to say, Lord, that's not enough. You said you're going to deliver me from anger in my heart. He will write his law in my mind means he'll give me a tremendous desire to be pure as he is pure.

That's his law. To love people like he loves. And then he will write it in my heart means he'll give me the ability to love people like him, like he does, and to be pure as he's pure, which is more than overcoming some bad habits.

You know, the absence of evil does not mean we are good. You can clean a cup completely clean and still empty. So you get rid of all the anger and all the dirty lusts and all the murmuring and complaining.

Is that new government? No, you clean the cup, which is far better than those whose cups are filthy. I agree. But that's more than that.

That cup has got to be filled with God's laws of love. So he's God says, I will write my law. I will put my law in your mind, giving you a tremendous desire to do my will in everything.

And then I will write this in your heart. Now, don't say quickly, Oh, brother Zach, I know all that. I've heard that from you 50 times.

Yes. I'll tell you when you know it, when you're practicing it. Until then, I have to say to you in Jesus name, you don't know it.

When you practice it, you know it. Till then it's only head knowledge. That is the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

You know, good and evil. You know, the new covenant truth of good and evil. You know, this book, the Bible is the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And it's also the tree of life. It can lead you to the tree of life. This is not the tree of life.

This can lead you to the tree of life, which is Jesus Christ. But this book by itself is only a tree of knowledge of good and evil. So if you study the Bible and become a great scholar, it just means that, you know, every leaf and every fruit in the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you know exactly what's evil and exactly what is bad and what is good.

But you haven't come to the tree of life. This is Jesus himself. So the fact that you know certain things does not mean you have them.

So we need to hear some things many, many times. God wants to write, put a desire in your mind to do his will, every part of his will, and then the ability to do it. For example, to forgive other people, which I emphasize a lot nowadays, because I'm convinced that many believers, their prayers are not answered because of one reason.

There is somebody on earth you have not forgiven. I don't know who it is. Maybe your mother-in-law, maybe your boss, maybe some X, Y, Z, somebody anywhere you haven't forgiven.

And you're wasting your time praying because the Lord, Psalm 66 verse 18 says, if you've got sin in your heart, the Lord will not even hear you. He will not even pick up the phone. Dear brothers and sisters, please examine your heart carefully to see whether you have actually forgiven every single person that you know of who's hurt you, harmed you, robbed you, cheated you, whatever it is.

If not, forgive them today. And forgiveness is an act of the will. In your memory, the memory of what that guy did will remain forever.

But in my will, I say I've forgiven. I say I wish something good for him, not evil. I don't wish evil for him.

And say that. Say that with your heart to God and before God. Lord, I don't wish any evil for that person.

I wish good for that person. I've forgiven that person. Do that.

It's very important. So, this is what the Lord does. He gives us the desire, and then he gives us, when he says he writes his law in our heart, that is described in Hebrews 13, 8, Hebrews 13, 8, like this.

The heart is strengthened by grace. When God writes his law in our heart, it means he strengthens my heart with grace. It's the same meaning, Hebrews 13, verse 8. And then when I'm under grace, sin cannot rule over me.

There's a lot of difference in that and the gritting your teeth and overcoming anger and gritting your teeth and overcoming sexual lust. Very different from when God writes a law in our heart. I think of the story of Noah.

You know, when the rain had subsided and thought the floods had gone down, the waters had gone down. He sent two birds out, a crow, a raven, and a dove. And we know from the baptism of Jesus that the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

What is that crow, the raven, a symbol of? The flesh, in which dwells nothing good. So here's the flesh and the spirit symbolized there in Noah's Ark. And we read that when the raven was sent out, it never came back.

Why didn't he come back? Because there was all those dead bodies and all floating on the surface of the waters, all the filth and decayed meat of animals and human beings, lots of it. And the raven said, hey, this is great. I've never had such a feast in my life.

Feasting on all that rotten stuff. That is the flesh, always wanting to feast itself on the rotten, sinful things in the world. But the dove, it went and saw all that and came back.

That's the difference between the flesh and the spirit. There's a revulsion in us when the Holy Spirit fills us. There's a revulsion.

You see all those temptations and you see anything that tempts you to pornography or to be bitter or to murmur or complain. And if the Holy Spirit's filled you, you immediately feel a revulsion. You want to turn away from it.

That's the Holy Spirit. God's written his law in your heart. You see something which the flesh is attracted to and you turn away from it.

That's the dove turning away. And you know, later the dove came with an olive branch, which is a symbol of peace. That's another mark of the Holy Spirit filling that we really seem to be at peace with everybody.

Like the angels sang when Jesus was born, glory to God in highest and peace on earth among those people with whom God is pleased. When God is pleased with you, the angels said, there'll be peace in

your heart. If you're not with peace in your heart and from your side, if you're not seeking to be at peace with other people, there's something God is not pleased with in your life.

Okay. I'm going to move on from there, which is the thing I wanted to emphasize that ultimately the purpose of God is not victory over sin. Even though for those of us who have defeated for years, victory over sin itself, we feel we've climbed Mount Everest finally.

We've overcome those terrible sins that defeated us for so long. That's not the top of the mountain. It says here, what is the top of the mountain? In Hebrews 8, 11, they will not teach his fellow citizen and his brother saying, know the Lord, all will know me from the least to the greatest.

Do you know that the greatest thing in the new covenant is not victory over sin? The greatest thing in the new covenant is not even a revulsion against sin, but it is to know God personally, to know him intimately as your friend, as your bridegroom, Jesus, and God, the father, as your father. That is the ultimate goal of the new covenant. There was no possibility under the old covenant that anybody could know God like that because they could not receive the Holy Spirit within.

They could only have the Holy Spirit upon them to anoint them, to kill lions, shut lions' mouths, overcome thousands of enemies, all types of things, external things like that, become wealthy. But I mean, Elisha had so much anointing in his dead bones that it raised up a dead man, all external. But knowing God is something reserved for the new covenant.

All shall know me personally. You know, when Moses said, I want to see the glory of God, God said, you can't see me because if you see me, you'll die. No man can see me and live.

I see that in a spiritual sense, what he told Moses, that if I want to see God, I've got to die. I can't live if I see God, it's not possible. Self cannot live.

If your self is living, I want to say to you, you haven't seen God. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. It's something which Moses longed for and he could not have.

It's a tremendous privilege we have in the new covenant to be intimate with God, to know him. And like we've often said, there's a lot of difference between knowing about him and knowing him. Like you can know about some big dignitary, can know about the president of the country, but you don't know him personally.

You can know all the facts about him. You can know his biography, but you don't know him. And a lot of Christians, they know about Jesus Christ.

They know about the new covenant. They know, and they even know how to die to themselves. You know, they know how to grit their teeth.

And when they're tempted to say, oh, I've got to die to myself here now. And they shut their eyes and say, God help me. I'm not going to look at that woman and I'm not going to murmur here.

I'm going to die there. Following the laws exactly. In a sense, they just made a new set of commandments, not the old 10 commandments, a new set of commandments.

I must die to myself daily. I must not look at this and I must not do that. And I must know that I must be righteous and money matters.

It's just a bunch of commandments. Do you think Jesus lived like that? Do you think Jesus, when he saw a pretty woman, he said, no, I must not lust after her. He wasn't living by laws.

There was something within him, God's nature that had taken over, that prevented him from ever doing that. And the wonderful promise in the new covenant is that I can partake of his nature. That comes as I know him more and more.

My dear brothers and sisters, don't ever be satisfied till God's nature is taking over more and more in your life. Again, that is not something that will happen overnight, but it is God's will more and more that it is not by a bunch of new commandments that you live a new covenant life. No, it's by nature.

It's nature that makes you come away from something. I've used the example of a pig or a cat falling into the dirty muck. A pig falls into the dirty muck and says, boy, this is lovely.

I haven't had such good food for a long time. And it just enjoys it. That's how a sinner's attitude to sin.

But a cat falls into that dirty muck. A cat can also fall into dirty muck. A believer can also fall into sin.

But the reaction of that cat is the exact opposite. It jumps out immediately. And not only jumps out, it licks itself clean.

I've seen cats licking themselves when I think there's not a speck of dust in it. It's amazing. You think that cat is pretty clean and is still licking itself.

And I say, what a picture of a believer. You think that's a pretty good believer, but he's judging himself and cleansing himself. I don't know whatever.

He's quite a saint in my eyes, but he still feels that things in his life he needs to cleanse himself from. That's a mark of a godly man because he knows God and he's seen more and more of the purity of God. It's like Isaiah when before he saw the glory of God in chapter six, he was just condemning everybody else.

Chapter five, which is right, he was a prophet. He had to do that. And he said, woe unto this person, woe to that person.

But when he saw the glory of God, he said, woe is me. I'm the person who's unclean. And then the fire of God came and cleansed him.

So make your aim to know God because that is eternal life. Eternal life is not, as I've often said, is not length of life because eternity does not mean that which has no end. If that's the meaning of eternity, then eternal life means a life that never ends.

But the correct definition of eternity is that which had no beginning and has no end. So eternal life is not a life that never ends, but a life that had no beginning. Aha.

So who's got that? Not even the angels. Only God. So that is what God wants to give us.

A life that had no beginning and has no end. Imagine. It's awesome when you think about it.

All the things we express as awesome in our American language is nothing compared to this awesomeness of God's eternal life. Life that has no beginning that I can partake of it. The very life of God.

Jesus said in John 3, you know, many people know this verse, John 3, 16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should have everlasting life or eternal life. Very well known verse. But very few Christians, I'd say less than 1% of Christians know what eternal life is.

The wages of sin is death, Romans 6, 23. But the gift of God is, it doesn't say forgiveness, the gift of God is eternal life. It's not just forgiveness.

It's not justification. It's not victory over sin. Much more than all that.

The wages of sin, eternal death, hell. The opposite, the gift of God, not forgiveness, not justification, not even victory over sin. Eternal life.

And it's a gift. I can't produce it. But keep your mind on eternal life.

Very, very important. And Jesus defines eternal life in John 17, 3, like this. This is eternal life.

That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. To know God personally. That's what he read in the New Covenant.

All will know me. So God's ultimate purpose is not victory over sin. You may have overcome every known sin in your life, so that you can say today, I have a clear conscience.

I believe God can do such a work. And I believe that everyone in NCCF should come to this live, you've heard it so much, where you should be able to say, like the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 6, I know nothing against myself. Zero.

My conscience is absolutely clear. But he says there are still areas in my unconscious life where I'm not yet like Christ. That's a good place to be in.

But we must go on from there to know God personally. Turn with me now to 1 Peter, 2 Peter rather, chapter 1. And here in 2 Peter chapter 1, it says the purpose of all of God's promises. And there are fantastic promises in the Old Covenant, and even better ones in the New Covenant.

And it says here that the purpose of all these promises, it's called in 2 Peter 1, 4, precious and magnificent promises. And coupled with those precious and magnificent promises, verse 3, his divine power has granted to us everything necessary for this eternal life and godliness. And it comes through knowing God, 2 Peter 1, 3. Through knowing God, everything necessary for life.

And it says here that thus, verse 4, this is one of the most amazing promises, that I can actually partake, verse 4, of God's own nature. This is the ultimate goal. This is not victory over sin.

This is way beyond. You know, when you compare victory over sin to partaking of God's nature, that's like climbing 100 feet up Mount Everest. That's victory over sin.

Mount Everest is 29,000 feet. But you climbed 100 feet, you got victory over sin. But to partake of God's nature, that's the top.

God's own nature. I don't know whether it overwhelms you or not. See, there are different levels in creation.

There's the vegetation level, trees and plants and all that. And the inanimate objects like the planets. And then a little higher than that is things that have got life like trees and plants.

And then there's something more, animals. And then there's something more, human beings and angels and all that. But beyond all that, which you cannot even compare distance, is God Almighty.

This is beyond the nature of angels, beyond the nature of human beings, the nature of God Himself. I don't know how to show the vastness of this. And this comes through knowing Him.

See Philippians in chapter 3, Philippians chapter 3, towards the end of Paul's life, what a large measure he had already known Christ. And he says, my passion in life is that I may know Him some more. At that stage in his life, he knew Christ way beyond any of us know Him.

Certainly beyond what I know of the Lord today. But he's still not satisfied. He says, I've got a passion in my life that I may know Him more because he knows that the more I know Him, the more I have eternal life, the more I have God's nature.

And the more, what happens is the more I know God and the more I partake of His nature, my spontaneous reaction to temptation will be to resist it. It won't be something I struggle and resist. It will be spontaneous.

See, I don't believe Jesus had to struggle to overcome lust or to struggle to overcome anger or remind himself, I must not murmur. No. All that in the early stages.

But we have to come to the place where it's spontaneous. It's like, like they say, water off a duck's back. Pour water on a duck's back.

I don't know whether it's really true or not, expression is the water doesn't stick to the duck. Temptation rolls off. And Jesus was tempted like us.

Of course, he had to resist it. But that was an inner attitude. And because he, he had this attitude, he partook of God's nature.

Temptation can be very strong. And you resist it, resist it, resist it. But I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters that don't think that your struggle with temptation has to be at the same level.

It'll be much easier, easier as time goes on. If it's not getting easier, I want to say to you very lovingly, you're a compromiser. You're not wholehearted.

If you are wholehearted, you're overcoming anger, bitterness, sexual lust will get easier and easier and easier. After you've killed a few giants in Canaan, the next giant will be pretty easy. Not that they're all killed, but it's going to get easier because partaking more and more of God's nature, my burden is that we shall not come short of God, what God wants us to have here on this earth.

Don't wait for eternity. A lot of people say, I'll be like Christ when he comes. What am I supposed to do to them? Just wait? No.

It says, if I have this hope, I'll purify, keep on purifying myself until I reach the standard of purity. Until I reach, you know that verse, if you're not familiar with it, please turn with me. I always want to show the verses to the weakest among us and not speak to the cleverest and those who know the scriptures.

My dear brothers and sisters, do you know 1 John chapter 3 verse 2 and verse 3? If you read them together, I pointed this out before. The hope that most Christians have, it says about this hope, verse 3. What is this hope? Most Christians, their hope is Christ is coming back. That's my hope.

It's called a blessed hope. I'll tell you, to me, that is the second part of my hope. Honestly, the first part of my hope, as it says in verse 2, the last part of verse 2 is, I will be like him.

What's he just seeing him? Even the devil see him. Don't the demons see him? Unbelievers will see him and they will tremble. So if my hope is only that I will see Jesus face to face, even the unbelievers will see him.

But my hope is not that. My hope is I will be like him when I see him. That's what it says in verse 2. So if you ask me what my blessed hope is, years ago, I would say, I will see Jesus.

I'm waiting for the second coming. Today, my blessed hope is I will be like him when I see him. And how do I know I have this hope? Not just by confessing with my mouth.

Verse 3 says, if you really have this hope, you will purify yourself or cleanse yourself till you reach his standard of purity. These are things I've said many times, but I'll never get tired of saying it again and again and again, because my goal is not to preach a new message every time. My goal is to make sure that every one of you who listens to me comes into this life, comes into this life of knowing God personally, intimately, not knowing about him, not knowing facts about Jesus or facts about the Bible or facts about the new covenant.

No, not that you'll be able to explain the new covenant to somebody else. You may not be able to explain it because you may not be a teacher, you may not have a clear mind, but you can partake of his nature. You know, some great saints in the Old Testament who could not explain the new covenant well, but who really knew God.

I read some of their writings. Sometimes I read it more than once because I am so blessed by what they write. And they were not people way back in the 17th century, 1600s.

There was a Roman Catholic woman in France called Jean, J-E-A-N-N-E, Guion, G-U-I-O-N, was known as Madame Guion. Many years ago, I read her autobiography. It challenged me so immensely.

And I'm reading it again, Jean Guion, the autobiography of Jean Guion. I'm reading it again and I said, boy, and I underline certain passages. You can get that book on Kindle, Amazon Kindle for free onto your phone or wherever and read it little by little.

It's absolutely free. Take time to read this now and then, the writings of these great saints. Some of these people who knew God, they couldn't explain the doctrine.

I don't think she would explain new covenant and all these things, but she actually died to self in her personal life. And I'm challenged. I'm challenged by some amazing women.

We emphasize that women can't teach, but I find that some women have taught me by their life. They can't teach the Bible because they're gifted for that. But their life has taught me many things.

Madame Guion, Jessie Penn Lewis, and Joni Eareckson, that lady who's been 50 years in a wheelchair. Yeah, I'm tremendously blessed by these. I'm not anti-women.

I'm tremendously blessed by these women. But I'm not blessed by people who try to show off and make money with their teaching like so many other women preachers or male preachers. I value those who know God.

And when I read what they say, what they write, or when I hear them speak, I want to know one thing. Does this guy know God? Does he know Jesus? Does he know my savior? Can he tell me something about my heavenly father? Not just some explanation of some clever interpretation of scripture. No.

Does he know something about God? That's the person who can help me. That should be your passion. Don't seek to be a respected sharer of the word in NCCL.

Don't make that your goal. That you will become more and more effective in sharing the word in NCCL. That's good.

Very useful. But if you don't have that gift, what can you do? But make it your passion to know God better. To know him.

Because then I tell you, you'll be a blessing to people just by meeting them. You speak to a person on a telephone, not sharing a word in NCCL, but you speak to a person on the telephone and that guy will be so blessed. Because what you say comes out of a knowledge of God in your life.

And it doesn't matter whether you're a brother or a sister or you're a young person. Make this the passion of your life. This is eternal life.

To know God. God says, all will know me in the new covenant. In the old covenant, they could not know him.

You only could hear about him from the scribe or some great prophet who went up to the mountain and came and spoke what God was like. But today you can know him personally. You can go up that mountain and meet with God yourself and know him for yourself.

So dear brothers and sisters, don't miss out on this tremendous privilege. So many of you are immigrants from other countries. Why did you come to the United States? Why didn't you go to some Congo or some country in Africa? Or why didn't you go to the Andaman Islands in India to work there? It's much easier to go to those places.

Much easier to get a visa to go there. And you felt there's more opportunity here. You can earn more money and you can provide more for your children.

Very, very good. Why don't you have that passion spiritually? I mean, the effort you made to get a visa to come here, to get a job, all that pain and effort and struggle and this and that, I hope you'll do that much to know God and to know Jesus personally. Otherwise, if I'm not willing to make that much effort to know the Lord and I made all that effort to get something earthly, like coming to the United States and getting a job and getting a good salary, I have to say to you that earthly things mean much more to you than spiritual things.

You're fooling yourself if you think you're spiritual. Just fooling yourself. Let me tell you the truth.

There's nothing wrong in what you did, but there's everything wrong when your passion for Christ is not as much. It should be far more than your passion for some earthly advancement. I'm not against getting a

good job, you know, or earning more money in an honest way.

Absolutely not. Because I believe that Psalm 1 verse 3 says, whatever we do will prosper. I believe that.

But I believe that should be far less than my passion to prosper in my knowledge of God. Then you're going to be a real blessing. In NCCF, you'll be a real blessing in your family.

You'll be a blessing even if your relatives don't get converted. They will respect you as a man who knew God. They'll never forget.

They'll never forget you. It was my desire even when I was in the Navy as a young man. I was a bold witness for Christ.

Everybody, every ship I went to, every naval base I worked in, people knew me as a Christian, out and out. And I tell you, they never forgot me. I met some of them years later.

They don't remember everything I said, but they could not forget me. I remember meeting an admiral about 30, 40 years after I left the Navy in Bangalore once, and he said, he said, Zach, I can never forget you. And what did they remember? Not some clever thing I said.

They knew that I stood for Christ. That was very different from the other Christians. I pray that even if you can't preach, my brother, sister, that people will know you by the influence of your life, that you're a person who's got the radiance of Christ.

There's a beautiful prayer in Psalm 90. It's the only psalm that Moses wrote. You know, Moses wrote one psalm.

David wrote most of them. But Moses wrote one psalm where he says in Psalm 90 and in verse 17, in some translations, let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. I like that.

Lord, this is what I want more than anything else. There are many other wonderful things written in that psalm, but I want the beauty of the Lord my God to be upon me. The people, when they see me, they see the beauty.

You know, like we sing in that song, let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. That can only come if your passion in life is to know him more and more and more and more, more than everything else, more than seeking to impress people. I tell you, brothers, sisters, one of the great temptations that can come to every one of you is to impress people with your spirituality or your knowledge of the word or the way you present something when you share the word in the meetings.

Fight it, kill it. Say, Lord, I don't want that. I want people to see the beauty of Jesus and let them forget about me.

And I'm not bothered whether they think I'm a good preacher or a good sharer of the word, or I said some sentence that really blessed them. Don't get excited if somebody quotes some sentence you quoted and said in some meeting, oh, forget it. We are tempted.

I've been tempted like that in the past years, but I found that all these things are like a foot on the brakes. The car slows down. Take your foot off the brakes and say, Lord, I just want to let the beauty of Christ be seen in me even if nobody sees it.

I often think of all these beautiful flowers and others in desert places. Who's there to admire them? Why in the world does God put beautiful flowers in deserts and other places where nobody sees them? Beautiful sceneries where nobody to admire them because God's not doing things just for people to watch and admire. That's just his nature.

And I say, I want to be like that. If nobody, supposing I'm like a flower in a desert, nobody sees me. Fine.

If God sees me, that's enough. Let your passion be to know God and that the beauty of God will be upon you, not for people to admire, but that people will be drawn to Jesus beyond you to him. Yeah, that's how it was with Jesus himself.

He never wanted, even he himself would always point to the father. He wasn't excited when any important person came. I often think of that passage.

You know, we're all familiar with that passage to fall into the ground like a grain of wheat and die. It's a very well known passage in scripture that Jesus taught you must fall into the ground and die. But have you noticed the context in which it comes? Come with me to John 12 and look at this in closing.

John 12, it says here, verse 20. There were some Greeks who came to the feast. Now, in those days, the Greeks were the very culture, the more intellectual than the Romans.

The Romans ruled the world with military power. But the scholars and the philosophers were all Greeks. Even 300 years before Christ, people like Socrates and all there.

The scholars were Greeks, great intellectual preachers and scholars and eloquent. And then later on, Greece defeated Rome and became the rulers of the world for a time. So these are very, very important people, high intellectuals of that time.

And they say, we want to see Jesus, verse 21. How would you feel if some very, very important people in society, political and important people or high intellectual people came to the church to join your Zoom meeting or your physical meeting? I want to have the reaction that Jesus had. Philip came and told Jesus, hey, Lord, these great Greeks have come to meet you.

He doesn't even, as far as I know, he doesn't even meet them. He said, a grain of wheat, verse 24, has to fall into the ground and die. Go and tell them that.

I don't care two hoots for your Grecian philosophy and knowledge. Fall into the ground and die. It dies, it bears much fruit.

And if you follow me, the Lord says, my father, verse 26, will honor you. It's not in the honor of the world or the Greeks or the Romans, anything that interests me. My calling in life is to fall into the ground and die.

The hour has come, verse 23, for the Son of Man to be glorified. This is the path a man who knows God will walk. He will not be affected by influential people, great people, famous people, rich people, nothing.

He knows God. There's a calmness about him. He's partaken of God's nature.

Dear brothers and sisters, long for this life. Make it the passion of your heart to have this life. Say, Lord, I want to know you.

I want to know this eternal life. I want to partake of your own nature more and more within me. I don't believe I have done justice to what is the burden on my heart.

I don't believe I ever can, because this is too big a subject for me. I pray that the Holy Spirit will convey to you whatever is the burden on his heart. Amen.

Shall we bow our heads a moment? We don't want to lose the impression that the Lord has formed in your heart at this time. Just pray, not that you remember all that I said, that's unimportant, but that you'll have a longing to know Jesus better, to know the Father better. He has promised, all will know me from the least.

You may be a young child, you can know the Father. God has promised it. For you, young boys and girls, you can know it.

You can know him better than some older people if you come with a simple heart. Say, Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally for you. I want to partake of your nature in my life, not just overcome some bad habits in my life.

Help me. Thank you, Lord. You'll do this for us.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/hPxe-jguVL4.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/gods-highest-purpose-for-us-in-the-new-covenant/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net