

Knowing God Our Father, our Forerunner, and our Helper

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God deeply, trusting in His care, and following Jesus as our forerunner. It encourages believers to keep a good conscience, choose humility, and trust that all things will work for their good as they love God and seek to be like Christ.

Scripture: Romans 8:28, John 14:16, Matthew 16:21, Ephesians 5:18, John 17:3, Philippians 3:10, Isaiah 50:4, Daniel 11:32, Hebrews 6:20, 1 Timothy 6:12

Topics: "Knowing God", "Trusting in His Care"

Description

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Transcript

One of the verses that I frequently think of in relation to the last days is a prophecy in the book of Daniel that refers to the days of the Antichrist. And you know, we are living in the last days, I have no doubt about that. And we are approaching the coming of the Lord and the days of tribulation and the rise of the Antichrist, which may be a person or maybe a group of people or a power or something, we don't know exactly when it does take place.

It'll be very against Christ and Christians, we know. But here it says in Daniel chapter 11, about the time when such forces will arise. And verse 32, Daniel chapter 11 and verse 32, if you can turn there for a moment.

It says that the Antichrist with smooth words, he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant. So when we interpret that in relation to what we've understood in the church in CFC, the covenant today means only one thing, the new covenant. The new covenant promises freedom from sin, not just forgiveness of sins, but deliverance from sin.

The new covenant, there is no one priest, we are all priests. In the new covenant, it's not one man running the show, we are building the body of Christ together. And in the new covenant, the Holy Spirit is not outside of us, he's inside of us.

So, but the Antichrist and the spirit of the Antichrist will lead people away from the new covenant. And then thus he will turn them to godlessness. And we can see that happening around the world today, we can see the amazingly surprising things that are happening in Christendom, in Christian churches, that are conducting marriages and things that are completely contrary to the word of God.

It began with divorce and now it's gone on to so many unnatural things. Turn to godliness, godlessness, and it's all because they have rejected and neglected the new covenant. And they're living by a standard of morality, which the world has.

You know, the difference that Adam was given a choice in the Garden of Eden between living by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which means by your own understanding of good and evil, or he could live by the tree of life, which is depending on God every moment, like a branch, depending on the tree every moment for the sap. That's a different way of life altogether. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is knowledge that I've absorbed through the years.

And I now decide what to do and what not to do. I know what's right, what's wrong. And that's how the world lives.

And that's how a lot of Christians live. But as God wants man to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, it's not just reading the Bible in the morning. No, a lot of people who read the Bible in the do not live by the word of God.

To live by the word of God means in simple terms, like the branch in the tree produces fruit. There's not a single moment when that branch is not receiving sap from the tree. That is to live by the word of God constantly from morning to night.

This is the way Jesus lived. So that is the new covenant. They could not have it in the old covenant.

In the old covenant, it's once in a while the prophet would come and speak. And if there was no prophet in your lifetime, you just missed it. And now and then God would speak, but not all the time.

Even Abraham and Elijah and John the Baptist, they heard God occasionally. But the wonderful thing in the new covenant is we can hear God not only every day, but every moment. Is there a single moment when a branch is not receiving sap from the tree? Think of that picture, my brothers and sisters.

That is how God wants us to live. Jesus said, as the branch cannot produce fruit without being in the tree, neither can you. It's a beautiful picture.

And I always think of that. I think of that when I get up to speak, I say, Lord, I want to be like that branch in the tree. Then I'll always have something flowing from you, not something crammed up in my head and study and then vomiting it all out.

That's not real ministry. I want to be like the branch in the tree all the time, not just when I'm speaking, but every single day, every single day of my life. He doesn't come suddenly, my brothers and sisters, but this is the life that you must long for.

Long for a life where your communication with God back and forth will be exactly like a branch in a tree, not a single moment. Then you'll never be dry. Your leaves will always be green and you'll always bring forth fruit.

So that is the wonderful blessing of having the Holy Spirit within us in the new covenant. But it says here in the Daniel 11, 32, again, even though some people are in that direction, the first part of verse 32, here is where we live. The people who know their God will be strong and do exploits and do wonderful things for God.

And I want you all, my brothers and sisters, not to have such a low estimate of yourself and to have such an inferiority complex because of various reasons, say, oh, God can never use me. I'll tell you why the various ways in which the devil makes you think like that. He'll remind you of all the terrible things you did in your past life.

You messed up your life here and there for so many years. Okay. But I believe the blood of Jesus has cleansed us from all those sins and justified means not only just as if I've never sinned in my life, that itself is a great thing.

Imagine if God were to say to you, I'm looking at you just as if you've never sinned in your whole life. That itself would be fantastic for me. But more than that, because that's like, I don't have any minus marks in my life, but I'm at zero, but it's not like that.

Justified means is just as if I've been righteous all my life. Not that I've got no minus marks, but I've got a hundred out of a hundred right from day one. Do you believe that that is what it means to be justified in Christ? This is what it means to be justified by his blood.

And I believe this is one of the most important things that we must be assured of and convinced of if we want to be firm in God. And that's the thing that will take the foundation away from the devil. So he's got nothing to stand on.

He's constantly harassing believers with making them feel guilty and condemned about the things they did in the past and which they have confessed numerous times. Think of some terrible sins you've committed in your past. How many times have you confessed it? I'm sure you've confessed it many, many, many times since you became a Christian.

You need to have confessed it only once. That's how powerful the devil is influencing our mind because we just don't believe when God says, I have cleansed your sin in the blood of Christ. I have declared you righteous in Christ.

It's really difficult to believe. I know I struggled with it for years, but this is what finally brought rest into my heart. The people who know their God will be strong.

And if you want to be strong, you have to make sure that you're founded on the righteousness of Christ and not your own determination to live a good life or saying, well, I really want to live to do the will of God from now on. I don't want to do the will. Or, you know, we speak so much about the taking of the cross every day and you can glory in the fact, well, I'm going to take up the cross every day.

I'll tell you, the devil will knock that foundation from you. Be founded only on the righteousness of Christ. All my righteousness, including my taking on the cross every day is filthy rags in God's eyes.

And you say, well, if you take that attitude, won't we have a light attitude to sin? Absolutely not. I found when I'm founded on the righteousness of Christ, I have a much more serious attitude against sin. And the devil doesn't get far in my mind.

He cannot disturb me, cannot shake, shake me and make me doubt the love of God. Yeah, he'll tempt of course. He even tempted Jesus.

So he'll tempt you. But if you know your God, you will be strong. Remember this word, the people who know their God will be strong in the last days to overcome anything, not only persecution, but all the fear that's going to come upon people in the last days.

And they will do wonderful things for God. That's the second part of that sentence there. But it says here further in verse 35, but some who are inside and will fall.

And it says here that some who have a great ministry, that's how it's in the living Bible, will fall. If you're not careful, if you're not watchful, if you depend on your own righteousness, and you don't seek to have an open heart by keeping a clear conscience, you can fall no matter which church you're in, no matter how many years you've been faithful. Some will fall who have had insight, who've understood the new covenant, will fall.

But even there, God will be merciful. And he'll use that fall to refine them and purge them and make them purer. Isn't that wonderful? That when God sees that your heart is sincere, I believe that's what he looks for.

He's not looking for purity, first of all. God is not looking for purity in you first. He's looking for sincerity and honesty.

That's easy. Purity can take time. Sincerity, meaning what you say.

Honesty, that doesn't take any time at all. A prostitute can be honest today saying, I am a prostitute. You can be honest.

You may have lived in victory and today you slipped up, got angry with someone. You just be honest. Say, Lord, I'm sorry.

I lost my temper. Forgive me. That's honesty.

That's sincerity. You can be cleansed immediately. Don't try to justify yourself.

Don't try and find some excuse. Oh, it was because of this pressure or that pressure. You'll never be forgiven.

Just be honest and say, I sinned. And you're cleansed immediately and you can move on with God. Never, never try to justify yourself.

The mark of the Pharisees was they justified themselves. Jesus said that's an abomination in God's eyes. Luke 16, 15.

You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men. And that is an abomination to God. I never in my life want to justify myself before God or before men.

I want to stand always on the righteousness of Christ and I want to keep a clear conscience. Immediately, immediately confess my sin of thought, word, deed, or sometimes attitude. An attitude towards someone which we suddenly realize that we've had a bad attitude or a judgmental attitude.

Nobody knows about it. I've never opened my mouth and I'm aware of it. I immediately say, Lord, I'm sorry.

I've had this wrong attitude, but you've made it light for me now and I'm going to get rid of it now. Cleanse me in that blood of Christ and help me to have the love of God poured in my heart through the Holy Spirit. That person may never change his attitude towards me, but my attitude is going to change towards him.

I'm going to be loving. It doesn't mean I'll have fellowship with everyone. No, Jesus didn't have fellowship with the Pharisees, but he died for the Pharisees.

His attitude was right. So I may not have fellowship with many, many believers also, but my attitude is going to be right. I'm going to walk in the light with God.

This is so important. The people who know their God will be strong and do exploits and to be watchful. He will keep us from falling.

It's very important to remember that also when we have not fallen consciously for a long time, it's very easy to begin to think I have been faithful and I've kept myself from falling. Garbage. It's he who kept me from falling.

When Peter walked on the water, every step, it was Jesus who prevented him from sinking into the waves. When he looked this side and that side, he sank immediately. I need to remember constantly, you can ask that Jesus is the one who keeps me from falling.

But we may say, how can I remember that all the time? My mind is on other things. In the beginning, it's a little difficult, but everything, you saw an act, it becomes a habit. So you keep on saying, Lord, I trust you to keep me.

I trust you to keep me. Over a period of time, it will become your habit that you trust the Lord to keep you and you never, never, never take any credit for anything that you have accomplished, that you have done, or for a day that you lived in victory. That is how we keep our relationship with God right.

God wants to be speaking to us all the time. And if we listen to that, we will not fall, particularly in these days when so many people are living in fear. What is the thing that will prevent us from falling a prey to fear? I'll tell you.

Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 50. Isaiah chapter 50, Isaiah 50 in verse 4, we read, the Lord God has given me the tongue of disciples that I may know how to sustain the weary one with the word. But I'm thinking of the latter part of that.

He wakens me morning by morning to listen as a disciple. I want to urge you, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, and he is speaking every morning. You know why the Bible begins with Genesis chapter 1, where it says, every day, God said something.

The first day he said something, the second day, he said something, the second, all the way until he had made man in the image of God in the sixth day. You know, the basic message of that is that every day of your life and my life, God wants to speak to me. There was not a single day missed out.

Every day he spoke until the final day when he will make me in his image, just like he made Adam in his image. That is the message of the first chapter of the Bible, which is the whole message of the Bible in a

nutshell. And so he awakens me morning by morning, not just to read the Bible for 15 minutes.

I used to think it was like that in the early days, but I realize now he's speaking about Jesus, that he woke up in the morning and began to listen to his father, and he never stopped listening. Right through the whole day. And the result is, I'm sure when he was sleeping at night too, God was speaking to him that even in his dreams, God begins to speak to him.

And I believe that'll happen. The more we listen to God more and more and more and more during the day, even in our dreams, God will begin to say something to us. And when Jesus heard something, he listened like a disciple.

Disciple means I want to obey what I hear and no matter what may happen. And he goes on to say in verse seven, the Lord God helps me. And therefore I set my face like a flint to do his will.

And therefore, because he helps me, who can condemn me? And we can also say, why do I have any fear then? The Lord God is there to help me. This is very, very important. You know, Jesus said in John 17, John chapter 17, I told you, we started with Daniel, Daniel 11, 32.

The people who know their God will be strong. And in the last days, so this is the most important thing to know God. Let this be your passion towards the end of Paul's life.

He writes to the Philippians in Philippians three, my passion is to know him, to know him. And you say, Paul, don't you know Christ already so much? He says, yes, but the more I've come to know him, I want to know him more and more. You know, it's like a married couple deeply in love with each other.

I wish all married couples were like this. They got married and they really loved each other when they began. And they knew very little of each other when they began, but they want to know each other more and more and more and more.

They want to love each other more and more and more. As time goes on, they're not happy with how much they loved each other yesterday or last week. They want to love each other more.

They want to know more of each other. They want to know each other more and more. That's the way Jesus wants to live with us to, in that bridal relationship, the people who know their God will be strong.

And Jesus said in John 17 three, this is eternal life that they might know thee. As I've often said, eternal life is not living forever because people who go to hell live forever. It's got nothing to do with eternity.

Eternal life is the life of God. It's not a life that never ends. Listen, eternal life is a life that never had a beginning.

That's why it's called eternal. Don't think of what never ends, but think it never had a beginning. You and I don't have that life.

Only God has it. Eternal life is life which had no beginning. And I can have that eternal life.

God gives it to me. It comes through knowing him. This is eternal life that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

So my passion in life must be to know God, to know God as my father. It's so important. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Three persons with one God. The very fact that I cannot understand it proves it is the truth because God is so much above me. I'll never be able to explain how three persons are one God, but I believe with all my heart, and I've seen it true in my life, to know the Father, to know Jesus Christ, and to know the Holy Spirit.

To know the Father, first of all. John chapter 1, we read that one of the purposes for which Jesus came to earth, we know it was to save us from our sin. You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

Matthew 1.21. But then what? After you saved me, or is saving me from my sin, what do I do? That's just a negative thing. I'm in sin, and he saved me from it. What is the positive part of it? The positive part of it is I know the Father.

John chapter 1, and we read here in verse 18, no one has seen God at any time. He's talking about the entire Old Testament period, from Adam, from the time he was out in the Garden of Eden, out of the Garden of Eden, till the day of Pentecost. No one could see God at any time.

They couldn't know him. He was outside everyone. But the only begotten Son has come and explained God to us, explained the Father to us.

That's the purpose for which Jesus came. Jesus came to explain to us this is what the Father is like. You don't have to be afraid of him.

I love that passage, you know, where it's, you know, when you see it in its context, you read that in John, it's at the Last Supper, when Philip came to him and said, can you please show us the Father? And that'll be enough. John 14, verse 8, Philip said to Jesus, Lord, show us the Father, and that'll be enough for us. We just want to see the Father once.

And Jesus said, I've been with you three and a half years, and haven't you come to know me, Philip? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. If you look at the life of Jesus, you know what the Father is like. And I see it in the context of what was happening there.

Just before he said that, he had washed their feet. This is the Last Supper you read in John 13. He did the job of a servant, washing their dirty feet.

And Jesus said, do you know the Father is like that? Oh boy, that really humbles me. When I think of that, that God stoops to wash my feet, God stoops to be like a servant towards me. And so often we act so big towards each other.

We haven't known the Father. Those who know the Father will be willing servants of others, will never, never seek to lord it over anyone. They will never lord it over their husbands, over their wives, over their children, over their servants at home or anybody.

Jesus washed the disciples' feet and said, have you seen me? You've seen the Father. I want to keep that vision before me all the time, because I know the people who know their God will be strong. And when other people fall away, I will not.

Many who have understanding will fall away, because their knowledge of God is through the study of the Bible. You know, it's like you study a book on electricity and there's still no light in the house. You can study all you want about electricity and there's no light in the house, but put the plug into the socket and the light turns on.

And that guy who plugged it in the socket may not know anything about electricity, but he's plugged into the source of power. So it's knowledge of the Bible is like knowing all about electricity. A lot of people are like that.

There's no light in their life. More than knowledge of the Bible is to know God, to plug into the socket and the light comes in. This is eternal life.

They might know Thee, the only true God, to know God as a Father who loves me, who cares for me, who wants to wash my feet, who wants to cleanse me, who sent His only Son, who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him freely for us all. How shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Are you familiar with that verse in Romans chapter 8? Let me read it to you. I often feel I must turn to these verses because there may be some in our midst who are not familiar.

So don't get impatient if you already know the verse. Remember there are other smaller children, spiritual children, who don't know the verse. So I'd like to turn to it in Romans chapter 8. It says here, He who did not spare His own Son, verse 32.

God, it begins with verse 31. If God is for us, who can be against us? That's a great word to live by in these days. You really believe God is for you.

When you have a doubt about that, then you've got to know the Father. And how can I know that God is for me? Because if I know God is for me, nothing can be against me. Nothing can be against me.

Not coronavirus or any virus or any human being or the Antichrist or his forces or the devil. Nothing can be against me. If God is for me, the most important thing is that God must be for me.

So let's look at that. Is God for me? How do I know that God is for me? Well, it says here in verse 32, Romans 8 and verse 32. He who did not spare His own Son, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? All things.

So that's the confidence I have. That if God gave His own Son to die for me on the cross, He will also with Him freely give me everything without any doubt. That is how I know God is for me.

By meditating on He did not spare His own Son. Why won't He freely give me everything else that I need? This is the God I need to know. We may think we already know Him quite a bit.

Let me show you the exhortation Paul gave to Timothy after Timothy had been a believer for about 25 years and had lived with Paul in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 12. 1 Timothy 6, 12. Fight the good fight of faith.

Take hold of eternal life to which you were called. Most Christians don't understand the meaning of that verse. Is he telling Timothy to be born again? All these Christians will say the moment you're born again, you've got eternal life.

Is he telling Timothy to be born again after 25 years of his being a born-again Christian? What does he mean take hold of eternal life? It means get to know God. When Paul was coming to the end of his life, what he was telling Timothy was get to know God as your Father. Very important.

You may say you already know Him. You need to know Him more. Take hold of eternal life.

Eternal life is to know God. And secondly, eternal life is to know Jesus Christ, God as our Father, and Jesus Christ as our forerunner. In the book of Hebrews, we read one title of Christ which is not found anywhere else in the New Testament, and that is in Hebrews 6 verse 20.

We follow Jesus who's gone inside the veil as our forerunner. In the Old Testament, inside the veil was where you got into the immediate presence of God in the most holy place, in the presence of the Father. And it says Jesus has opened a way for us to go inside the veil as our forerunner.

I need to know Jesus the way He lived on earth. And that's why we need to study the Gospels. I read the Gospels frequently to see how Jesus lived.

I ask the Holy Spirit to show me different parts of Jesus' life which are hidden between the lines. It's not just a story, a story even a child can read. But the Holy Spirit can show me the heart of Jesus as I read the way He lived, His attitude to people, and what He did in between, and why did He go out early morning into the desert places away from His home.

And always seeking the Father's will, how He lived day by day, He's my forerunner. Look at the light, looking up at Jesus, we run this race. The book of Hebrews is a great book.

It's not a very popular book among Christians, unfortunately. When I took a study through the Bible in 70 hours, 70 hours for 66 books, I spent four hours on Hebrews alone. Because Hebrews explains the humanity of Jesus Christ as the one who's my example whom I can follow more than any other book in the entire Bible.

And if I want to see Jesus as my forerunner, I can see in the Gospels, and I see the challenge in the book of Hebrews. So, we need to know Jesus by seeing how He lived, how He reacted in different circumstances. And then I need to know the Holy Spirit's power to help me to walk that way.

So, I need to know God is my Father, but the Father is my Father, and Jesus Christ as my forerunner. And thirdly, I need to know the Holy Spirit as my helper. That's the other thing Jesus said in John chapter 14.

In the same message where He spoke about eternal life is to know God and to know Jesus Christ, John 17. Earlier than that, He said in John 14, 16, I will ask the Father and He'll give you a helper, another helper, not a helper, but another helper, which means it's going to be the present helper to the disciples was Jesus Christ living with them. And now I'm going to ask for another, that means I'm going away, the Lord said, but I'll ask for another helper.

I've been your helper all along. In any tough situation you were in, He told the disciples, I was there. In a storm in the lake, I was there.

When there was sickness around, I was there. Whatever happened, I was there. They could always turn to the Lord.

Now He was going away. He said, I won't be away. I'll send you another helper, exactly like me.

And till now, see John 14, this helper will be with you forever. And verse 16 and verse 17, it says in the last part, at the moment, He's not inside you. He's only with you.

Like I've been with you for three and a half years. And Jesus could, if I were to amplify His words, I was with you disciples for three and a half years. And at the end of it, you're still fighting with each other as to who's going to be the leader.

You're still scared. Even after my resurrection, you'll be scared sitting inside a room. But the day will come, John 14, 17, when the Holy Spirit who's with you will come inside you.

Then you will know Him as a helper from within. Then you won't be afraid. Then you won't sit inside locked doors.

You'll throw the doors open like they did on the day of Pentecost. Tremendous things happen when you come to know the Holy Spirit as your helper. It is like having Jesus Christ inside you.

When He was with them, they could not overcome sin. They still wanted to call fire down on the Samaritans if they didn't listen to them. And they argued with each other and fought with each other for the highest place.

And they ran away when people came to capture Jesus. All that changed when He who was with them came inside them. I fear, my brothers and sisters, that many believers in CFC churches have never experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We've been so distracted by the false teaching among Pentecostals and the absence of teaching among the brethren and others. I'm not despising them. There are good believers among all of them.

But I tell you, what is needed is a constant infilling of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5.18 says, be being filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the meaning of that word, Ephesians 5.18, be being filled with the Holy Spirit.

That is the secret of our Christian life. Because, turn with me there, Ephesians 5.18. Don't get drunk with wine, but be being filled with the Holy Spirit. That means not just being filled with the Spirit once.

Yeah, thank God for every such experience and crisis experiences. But be being filled with the Holy Spirit and then you will have a life where you're always thanking the Lord. There'll be a song in your heart.

When you're being filled with the Spirit all the time, there'll be a song in your heart. Even if you're not a good singer, with your mouth, there'll be a song in your heart. It says you're making melody with your heart to the Lord.

There'll be a melody in my heart. And always giving thanks, no matter what may happen. See, we are living in days when there's anxiety, fear, tension.

What will happen? What will happen if the food runs out in the stores? What will happen if we lose our jobs? What will happen if some of you lose your visas? What will happen? Fear, fear, fear, fear. Exact opposite of giving thanks always. But here it says when the Holy Spirit fills you, be being filled with the Spirit, you'll be always giving thanks.

Not for one or two things, for everything that happens. Lord, I can't understand why you have allowed all the terrible things to happen in the world that's happening right now. But I believe my Father that you're

sovereign and you're controlling this universe.

God is still on the throne and He never forsakes His own. He's there. He remembers His own.

He will not leave you. He will not forsake you. And therefore, I give thanks for the way you run this world.

I can't understand it. I would not run the world according to my wisdom like that. But God's wisdom is way above mine.

I mean, if I were in God's place, I wouldn't think of allowing coronavirus to go around the world. But I see an almighty God in heaven decides He's going to allow it. You think it can go around without His permission? Is there a single worm or virus that can move one centimeter without His permission? Impossible.

I believe in a God who runs this universe. Our Father who art in heaven. And therefore, I can give thanks.

I'm not giving thanks for evil. I'm not giving thanks for sickness. But what am I giving thanks for? I'm not giving thanks because I can explain everything.

There are 101 things I cannot explain. And I don't want to explain it. But I know one thing.

My Father runs this universe. Not just this earth. The whole universe.

And Jesus said, whenever you pray, begin with our Father who art in heaven. That means I'm sure He's my Father who loves me and I'm sure He's running this universe. He has not given up that position.

And that is why I give thanks, because He's running this universe. I give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, the other thing that happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, look at this.

It says in verse 21, we'll be willing to give place to one another, to be subject to one another. The fear of Christ means I'm willing to give my brother his space. I don't want to crowd into people's lives.

I keep my space and I'm willing to give my brother his space. And I'm willing to allow him to live within his boundary. I will not tread into another person's boundary.

I will respect the boundary of my wife. I will respect the boundary of my children. I will respect the boundary of that weak brother in the church who's not strong enough to resist my strong soul power.

See, some of us have got strong soul power. And you have a weak brother in the church who's very timid, and it's very easy for somebody with soul power to just overwhelm him. And you think you're making him believe so many things.

No, you're not giving him a space. You're not allowing him to grow. As long as he clings to you, he's spiritual.

The moment he leaves you, he becomes carnal, because I've never given him his space when he lived with me. I have to give him freedom. I'd be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

That's what happens. Jesus gave people freedom. One of the most amazing things I find in scripture, in the gospels, is that place.

I always come back to it in Matthew 16, where it says, where, you know, Peter, Jesus had just told Peter about building the church. And it says here, he told them about that he was going to the cross, Matthew 16, verse 21, Matthew 16, 21. Jesus began to show his disciples they were going to suffer.

And listen to this. Can you believe it? Verse 22, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Rebuke is a very strong word.

Have you ever rebuked anybody? Not give a gentle suggestion. There's a world of difference between a gentle suggestion, saying, Lord, I don't think you should go to the cross. No, no, no.

This is a rebuke. And the thing that I see there is I'm amazed that Peter would ever talk like that. But I'm more amazed that Jesus made himself so ordinary and moved around with his people, just like one, his disciples, just like one of them, that they felt free to rebuke him, to correct him.

See, it's a challenge to me. I say, Lord, this is how I must live with my fellow believers, even among the youngest of them, that I must never overpower them with my personality or my strong soul power. They must feel free to speak to me freely, to joke with me, to laugh with me, rebuke me if needed, because, Lord Jesus, that's how you lived on this earth.

You never made yourself distant from people. So many preachers and Christians are so distant from others. You dare not come near them.

They give you the impression that they're so big and so important that you can't come near them. Hypocrites learn from Jesus. This is eternal life, that they might know thee, Jesus Christ.

And I know Jesus from that verse, how he was with his disciples that Peter could rebuke him. And so we are subject to one another in the fear of Christ. So we know the father is our father who cares for us.

I'm not an orphan. I'm not an orphan. I'm not insecure.

I'm a son or you're a daughter. We are sons and daughters, not orphans. We are not servants.

We are sons and daughters. We have a father. We know Jesus Christ is the one who's gone ahead of us.

He will never tell us to go to a place where he's not gone ahead of us. When we think of the future, with all the uncertainty there is in the world right now, I praise God that as I face tomorrow, I've got a forerunner who's gone into tomorrow before me. Can you say that? That as you face tomorrow, you've got a forerunner who's gone into tomorrow before you.

And who says to you and me, follow me. That's all you got to do. You don't have to go into an unknown future.

It is unknown to me, but I've got someone who's gone ahead of me. And I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. I don't even know what's going to happen this evening.

But I know that someone has gone ahead of me. That makes a world of difference. The people who know their God will be strong.

The people who know Jesus Christ have eternal life. They'll be strong. They will not be afraid of enemies of the gospel.

They'll not be afraid of the viruses that are enemies of the human body. No. They believe our God in heaven is in control of everything, every little thing.

He's numbered the hairs on our head. It's amazing that Jesus picked out that smallest little thing that can happen to us. Think for a moment, which is the least important thing that can happen to your body? You get up in the morning one day from bed, and you find one hair on your pillow.

You get all panicked. I've lost a lot of hair, but I don't get panicked if I see one hair on my pillow. It's okay.

I'll tell you why. Because he's numbered them. And my father knows the exact moment when that hair fell off from my head to the pillow, and he's realized that the number of my hairs has become less.

That's fine. Even if it goes all the way down to zero, it's okay. He knows exactly the smallest, little, most unimportant thing that we never bother about.

He says, your father knows it. When you know the Father, when you know Jesus Christ, you don't get into a panic. Whatever may happen, or whatever you think may happen, you ask yourself, is that something that is more serious than losing one hair? It is.

Well, then why should I be bothered? Because the least serious thing, losing one hair, Jesus said, your father knows about it. That is the least serious thing that can ever happen to any of us. One hair from all the thousands of hairs in our head fall off, and he knows about it.

I praise God that Jesus took such an example. He took an example of the birds. Not one sparrow falls to the ground.

That means not one sparrow dies. Not one sparrow gets, how do they die? They get sick. One sparrow, somewhere in the world, out of all the millions of sparrows, got sick with some type of virus and died.

And my father knows about it. And you think your father doesn't know about you? Do you think my heavenly Father will not know if some virus is in danger of coming into my body? Do you think he doesn't know that? Then you don't believe in God at all. Let me tell you, then you're an atheist claiming to be a Christian.

We are tempted. Sure, we are tempted. Jesus was tempted.

Tempted to anxiety? Of course. I can be tempted to everything. Jesus was tempted to commit suicide, to jump off the temple.

That's the most terrible thing. So what? Temptation means nothing. He just resisted it.

So the fact that you're tempted, you may be tempted to watch pornography. It doesn't mean you're evil. You're rejected.

You may be tempted to commit suicide. Rejected. You may be tempted to get anxious.

Rejected. You may be tempted to worry about the future. Rejected.

Because you see, I have a Father who runs this universe. The people who know their God will be strong. I'll be at rest in Him.

You say, what about my children? Well, doesn't your father know the number of hair on the head of your children? Of course he does. It doesn't matter how many children you have. He cares for every single one of them.

There are more sparrows in the world than children you have. And if he cares for all the sparrows, you can be absolutely sure that he cares for every single child of yours. He knows exactly what problems your children have.

They may be struggling in school. They may be struggling with sickness. They may be having some deformity or defect.

Your Father knows it. He knows the hairs on your head. The people who know their God will be strong.

This is what happens when the Holy Spirit comes in. He assures us so that we do not live in fear. You know, we could go on the whole day talking about this.

God is such a good God. And I wish I could convince the whole world about just this one thing. Your Father is a good Father.

And you believe just this one thing. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him freely up for us all. We didn't even ask the Father to send the son.

Our greatest problem is not coronavirus. It is sin. Coronavirus can take us to the grave.

Sin can take us to hell. And the Father solved that problem, not because we asked him to. He sent his son to save us from the greatest problem we face, going to hell.

And you think if he did that for us, he's not going to do all the other things? Of course he will. Then you may say, why do some bad things happen to good people? Why do some things happen to Christians? I'll tell you. I don't know.

There are many, many questions in the world I can answer with three words. I don't know. Why don't you know? Because I am not God.

But one thing I do know, definitely, Romans 8, 28, every single thing that happens to me, because I'm a child of God, I love him, will work for my good. Not just won't harm me. Romans 8, 28 said, all things that happen to you will not harm you.

That itself will be a great comfort. Will not harm me? Praise the Lord. But this is more than that.

All things will work for your good. What's the condition? I love him. That's all.

And I'm called according to his purpose. I want to live for him. I want to be like Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be called according to his purpose? The purpose of God is to make us like Jesus Christ. Do you love him? To the best of your knowledge, none of us can say we love him perfectly. I can't say I love God perfectly, but to the best of my knowledge, I love Jesus Christ.

I love God. And to the best of my knowledge, I want this purpose to be fulfilled in my life, which is to become like Christ. I don't always do it perfectly, but I want it.

There's no doubt in my heart that I want it. And I believe that of you brothers and sisters, you wouldn't be in NCCF if that was not your desire. You want to be like Christ.

Don't condemn yourself. Don't let the devil condemn you. Don't let the devil tell you you're hopeless.

You may have many weaknesses. I have many, but I will not allow the devil to tell me I'm hopeless. God chose me before the worlds were created, and he sent his son to die for me, but I have never asked him to do it.

Why won't he do that for you? He'll do more than we can ask or think. I wish I could go on forever talking, but I think that's enough. I'll allow the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

He will lead you further and further along the lines you have heard today. Please open your heart. Confess every sin immediately.

Don't wait. That's the one thing I made a law for myself. I will never wait one moment.

If my conscience convicts me about something, immediately go to God. He's everywhere. I can talk to him anywhere.

In the middle of the night, if I wake up or anywhere, I can tell, Lord, I slipped up there. Forgive me. Cleanse me.

I'm gone. Finished. I move on with a clear conscience.

I pulled out that thorn, and that thorn is not bothering anymore. I'm moving on. Live like that every day.

Keep a good conscience, and one more thing. Whenever you get an opportunity, choose the way of humility. Are you in a discussion with somebody, getting a little hot? Choose the way of humility.

Go down. Choose the way down. That's the way Jesus went.

I know these are the only two laws I live by. Keep a good conscience and always choose the way down in my relationship with others. Always, always, always.

I believe God will be with me as he has been with me through many, many years as I've sought to keep this before me, to keep a good conscience and to always choose the way down. Never, never to try to exalt myself over another person. Never to try to show I'm smarter than somebody or cleverer than somebody or better than someone in any way.

No interest in that. I want to go down, and I want to keep a good conscience. If you'll follow these two simple rules, keep a good conscience and always go down, I believe you'll be amazed to see how the presence of the Father is so real with you.

The presence of God is so with you that you don't have to practice the presence of God like one book says. You don't have to practice it. He'll be there, and you'll know it.

You'll know he's there in the moment of your need. He'll be there. He'll speak to you in the moment of decision, what decision you should take.

God bless you all, my brothers and sisters. I love you all in Christ, and I'm so thankful that you are my brothers and sisters in Christ. I need you, and you need me.

Let me bow our heads in prayer. Let's pray. Let's be reverent before God in this moment.

Heavenly Father, we don't take your word for granted. It's a tremendous privilege on this earth that we can even hear your voice. Thank you.

Lord, I never want to take it for granted that you, Almighty God, humble yourself to speak to me. I want to be grateful, Lord, all my life. Thank you for speaking to us.

Let your name be glorified. Thank you for giving us a wonderful meeting today, even though we are so separated by distance, but in the spirit, we are one. Thank you.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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