

(Laying Hold on Eternity) Knowing God as Our Father

by Zac Poonen

Knowing God as our Father is the key to experiencing eternal life and overcoming insecurity and fear.

Duration: 49:41

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:17, Matthew 6:33, John 17:23, Romans 2:11

Topics: "God The Father", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares their personal journey of coming to know God as a compassionate and understanding Father. They emphasize the importance of knowing God as a father and how it can transform one's life. The speaker also highlights the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman as an example of God's love and acceptance. They discuss the concept of being born again and the significance of knowing God intimately. The sermon concludes with a dream the speaker had, where they realized that the voice telling them they were not good enough was actually from the devil, not from God.

Transcript

My subject for this weekend is laying hold of eternal life. And I want to take three sessions on that. This is a phrase found in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 12, where Paul tells Timothy, and remember, Timothy was not a new believer, he was Paul's finest co-worker.

In another passage in Philippians 2, Paul says, among my co-workers, I don't have anybody like Timothy. He is the only one who really never seeks his own in anything. And to this man, Paul writes towards the end of Paul's own life, when Timothy had already known the Lord perhaps for 25 years, he writes to him in 1 Timothy 6.12, Now, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of eternal life.

Now, most of us are believers here, and we've heard the well-known verse, Romans 6.23, the gift of God is eternal life. It's very dangerous when we use logic to try and explain Scripture. When we, I know when I was a young Christian, I was told, what do you do with a gift? Somebody offers you a gift, you take it, and it's yours, you got it.

Now, if you apply that logic, it was pretty stupid of Paul to write to Timothy to lay hold of eternal life. And Timothy should have said, I already got it, I got it 25 years ago. I fear that many, many Christians, and perhaps many people sitting here, have got a wrong understanding of eternal life.

We base our understanding perhaps just on that one verse, the gift of God is eternal life. But there's a lot more to it than that. And it's because we don't obey this exhortation to lay hold of eternal life, that many Christians find their Christian life so shallow.

And very often a Sunday service like this becomes like a pep talk to revive them, but the momentum they get here doesn't seem to last long. And they're down in the dumps before next Saturday. They need another pep talk.

And if you find your Christian life is like that, up and down and up and down, and revived occasionally by pep talks and Sunday services or in other meetings like that, I'll tell you what you need. You need to lay hold of eternal life. You need to understand this verse.

And when Jesus defined eternal life, he defined it in a very different way from the way we would understand it. To many people, eternal life means you live forever. But people who go to hell live forever too.

But they don't have eternal life. And not only them, it says, Jesus said, even the worms in hell live forever. The worm never dies, he said.

So obviously, eternal life, those worms in hell don't have eternal life. So eternal life cannot mean living forever. It must mean something else.

What does it mean? The definition of eternity is something, not something that never ends, but something that never had a beginning and never ends. A life that had no beginning and no end. That's not your life or my life or any created life.

That's the life of Almighty God. So eternal life is actually another expression for the life of God. And that's what we need to lay hold of.

And Jesus defined it in John 17 and verse 3 in this way. And you couldn't get a better definition of eternal life than Jesus' own words. John 17, 3. This is eternal life.

That they may know thee, he was praying to his father, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. So here is Jesus' definition of eternal life. It means to know God, to know Jesus.

And that's a very deep word, to know. It's used in the Old Testament to express the most intimate relationship between husband and wife. Jesus turns around to people in the day of judgment and says, I never knew you.

To know. You know, there are many expressions we use to find out whether a person is a believer. We ask people, are you saved? Are you born again? Are you converted? Have you accepted Christ? And all of them mean the same thing.

But I find that many of those words have lost their value. A lot of people say they are born again today. They don't seem to manifest any evidence of new birth.

But I have, over the years, come to prefer to use the expression, do you know the Lord? Do you know God? Do you know Jesus? Do you know him as a personal friend who walks with you every day? Do you know him as someone on whom you can cast all your burdens? Do you know God as your dad? Jesus

described people in the world who don't know God as father, as orphans. In John chapter 14, he said these words to his own disciples. He said, I will not leave you as orphans.

An orphan is one who doesn't have a father. In the Old Testament, people were like that. They knew God as God Almighty.

But it was like knowing the CEO of the universe. There's no relationship to you. I mean, you can work in a company for many, many years and never meet the CEO even once.

Probably very difficult to go and meet him. You've got to go through so many secretaries and so many levels of leadership before you reach the CEO. But that CEO's little son can go and sit in his lap without making any appointment or any such thing.

He just walks in because he's his dad. That's the difference between Old Testament and New Testament. And when I say that many Christians are living as though it were still BC, what I mean is they know God as Almighty, the CEO of the universe.

But they don't know him as dad. And I'll tell you why. Because when you look at their life, you find all the characteristics of orphans.

See, orphans are very insecure. They don't know who's going to take care of them. They are afraid of the future.

Are you a Christian and afraid of what will happen in the future? Well, I don't want to make you feel condemned, but I want to tell you you're an orphan. And you don't have to be. If you listen to the word of God that you hear this evening, you can completely finish, and believe it, you can finish with being an orphan.

You can know God as your own personal dad. You know, when Jesus was teaching his disciples, he said, you know, they once heard him pray. We read in Luke chapter 11 that Jesus was praying somewhere, and he was obviously praying audibly because they heard him.

And they found something different about the way he was praying. And they had spent 20, 30 years listening to the Pharisees praying their long, monotonous prayers in the synagogue. And when they heard Jesus, it was so different.

He was talking to somebody he knew. He was talking so intimately. And they turned around to Jesus and said, Lord, teach us to pray like this.

This is real prayer. And then the first thing he said to them was, in Luke 11, verse 2, when you pray, the first thing you need to know is to call God your Father. And that was revolutionary.

I mean, today we just take it for granted. But remember that in the history of Israel, nobody had ever dared to call God Father. It was absolutely revolutionary.

God was almighty, distant, you had to tremble before him, etc., etc. God didn't change. But when Christ came to earth, he brought us into a relationship with the Father where we could call him Dad, and not just call him.

It was not just a question of terminology. It was a whole change of our relationship with him. I've seen, you know, we have many orphanages in India.

And I've seen people who come out of these orphanages. Years later, you can see their behavior when they are 30, 40, 50 years old. And you see that they came out of an orphanage.

They never knew the love of a father when they were children. And so you find them very possessive. They want people to be only their friends and nobody else's friends.

They're very exclusive, they're very insecure. They hoard things because they're afraid. There wouldn't be anybody to take care of them tomorrow.

And if you find you're a Christian like that, that's the orphan syndrome. And I want to tell you that the word of Jesus is, I will not leave you as orphans. He wants us to know our Heavenly Father as one who cares intensely for us.

One who loves us, he explained, as much as he loved him. In John 17, verse 23, I never get tired of speaking about this because this is what changed my life many years ago from being an insecure Christian, always feeling inferior to others, always trying to prove myself to someone who was completely secure, who didn't have to prove myself to anybody in the world because I found God loved me as he loved Jesus. That's one of the most amazing verses in the whole Bible.

In John 17, verse 23, Jesus prayed that we may know, if we have surrendered to him, if we have given our life to Christ, that we may know this, that the world may know this, that the Father loves us as much as he loved Jesus. This is an amazing truth. And I have preached this for 30 years now because it's changed my life and I'll never stop preaching it.

And I'll never stop preaching it because I find that so many Christians still don't believe it. They don't live as they believe it. I've often thought about the story of D.L. Moody, the great evangelist, here in the United States over 120 years ago or so.

He took a series of meetings somewhere and for one week, every evening, his subject was, You must be born again. So there was one man there coming every evening hoping to hear a new message and it was, You must be born again. And at the end of seven days, he went up to Moody and said, Why do you always say, You must be born again? He said, Because you must be born again.

That's why. So when people ask me, Why do you keep talking about knowing God as a father? Because you need to know God as your father. You need to know Him as your dad.

I tell you, it will change your life completely. And you need to hear that again and again until you lose all your insecurity, all your fear and anxiety. Think of a verse like this.

Jesus said in Matthew 6 and verse 31, Do not be anxious. How many Christians have you met in the world who even believe that such a life is possible in this world? Did Jesus give us impossible commands? I tell you, you can know that life every day if you know God as your dad. Fears.

Do you know the number of times Jesus said, Fear not, fear not. Don't fear, don't fear, don't fear. How many Christians have you met who are free from fear and anxiety? They say they've accepted the Lord.

They've said the magic words, Lord Jesus come into my heart, I'm a sinner. And they've been told, Now God is your father. And all that.

But it doesn't seem to sink down. The Holy Spirit has come to show us, God is our father. Jesus came to reveal that.

The Bible says that no one had seen God at any time. John 1.18. But Jesus explained the Father to us. His whole life was to demonstrate that God was a loving Father.

Once when Philip, one of his disciples, said, Lord, just show us the Father once. And Jesus said, Have I been so long with you, Philip, and haven't you known me? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. In other words, he was saying, if you want to know what the Father is like, just look at the life of Jesus.

That's how he was. That's how the Father is. And that's how Jesus wants us to know him.

And that's what removes many things. You know, jealousy of other people. Do you find yourself jealous? Jealousy comes because you feel that God has given that person more than me.

In a material, in the material realm, or spiritually, or in any way. I'll tell you something. If you know God as your dad, it will eliminate, remove jealousy from your life completely.

You'll never again be jealous of another person. It's true. Because you'll realize that your Heavenly Father made you exactly the way he wanted you to be.

And he made that other person exactly the way he wanted him to be. And there's no competition. There's so much of competition, even among believers.

I found myself like that in my early days as a Christian, for many years after I was born again. I found myself in competition. I wanted to prove to others that I was better till I knew God as my dad.

And it went from my life completely. I'll tell you honestly. I'm not in competition with anybody in the world today.

I'm just quite happy to be what I am. The way... And... And it can be, it can be like that in your life. The whole secret is knowing God.

As our father. Knowing God the Father as our father. And to lay hold of this means we get to know him more and more and more and more.

It's like, you know, when a little baby first cries out, Daddy. Yeah, he's come to identify. This is my daddy.

But you know, as that child grows up, he comes to know his father better and better and better and better. That's how we're supposed to know. Until one day, that little child himself becomes a father.

And then he begins to appreciate his earthly father much more. And this is how it is in our Christian life. God wants us to grow up to the place where we become spiritual fathers.

Helping others the way he has helped us. We're not supposed to be just attending meetings all our life and just receiving and receiving and receiving. We're supposed to be growing up.

I mean, if you've been a believer even for 10 years, I would say it's about time you became a spiritual father to others. Think of a difference it would make to the workload of many pastors and elders in many churches if many people in the church became spiritual fathers. That is God's will for us.

There's a lovely verse in Romans chapter 2 which has encouraged me tremendously. In Romans chapter 2, it's a little statement about God's nature. And if you understand the implication of this, it's absolutely fantastic.

It's a very simple statement which says in Romans 2, in verse 11. Romans 2, 11. There is no partiality with God.

Now, all of us understand that. There's no partiality with God. Think of a father now.

Think of God as a father. If you have children, and if you're a good father, you will show no partiality between one child and another. All will be exactly the same.

If you have an inheritance to divide, you'll divide it equally. You will treat each one exactly like the other. You will do for the youngest what you did for the oldest.

That would be a good father. When it says God is, there's no partiality with God, that's exactly what it means. That he'd do exactly the same for all his children.

Now, I want to show you the implication of this. The Bible says in Romans chapter 8, and verse 29. Romans chapter 8 and verse 29, we read that way back in eternity, God predestined those who would receive Christ as their Savior and Lord, whom he knew by his foreknowledge who they would be.

He predestined all of them to become like Jesus in their character. And the purpose of this is so that, listen to this, this is an amazing verse, whom he foreknew, that means the ones whom he looked way into the future through thousands of years, and he saw you and me, that sometime in the 21st century we'd accept Christ. And he knew that millions of years ago.

That's foreknowledge. And those whom he foreknew, he predestined. That means he determined a destination for them, and that destination is not heaven, that destination is to become like Christ.

And the ultimate purpose of this is so that, Jesus would be the firstborn, or the eldest brother among many brothers. Now I don't know whether you know, that when Jesus came to earth, he was called the only begotten son of God. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

He had only one son. That's why he's called the only begotten. You know, it's like if you have only one son, you say, that's my only son.

But when you turn around to your son and say, this is my firstborn son, what does that mean? That means you've got other sons. Do you know that that happened at the resurrection? Do you know that the name of Jesus changed from only begotten son to firstborn son when he rose up from the dead? Why? Because now, God had other sons. And that's what he says here.

That Jesus is now the firstborn, and after the resurrection, he's never again called the only begotten. I mean, you can call your first son your only son as long as you don't have any other sons. But once you have other sons, you can't call him your only son.

He's your firstborn. And that's the significance, this tremendous meaning to this. The only begotten became the firstborn.

And who are the others? It's you and me. Believe it or not. It's you and me.

We're to be the younger brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. It's so wonderful. It's mind-boggling, I'll tell you that, when you think of the implications of this.

And that's why, on the day that Jesus rose up from the dead, he called God, his Father, by a special title that he had never used in his entire earthly life. If you read the Gospels, you'll see that Jesus always referred to the Father as my Father, or sometimes your Father, when he spoke to his disciples, your Heavenly Father knows what you need, or my Father, so and so. But after his resurrection, we read in John chapter 20, he used an expression, a title for God, where he combined these two, and that's very significant.

In John chapter 20, when he met, when Mary Magdalene, the first person to see the resurrected Lord, he said to her, go to, this is John chapter 20 verse 17, John 20 verse 17, he said, stop clinging to me, because I'm not ascended to the Father, but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father. Here was an expression that was never used before, my Father and your Father, because now, I'm no longer the only begotten Son, I'm the firstborn. And that's the first time that he called his disciples, my brothers.

Earlier on, he'd said, who are my brothers, those who hear the word of God and do it, etc. But when he turned around to his disciples in John 15, he said, I call you servants, now I call you friends. But in John 20, after the resurrection, he could say, my brothers, we need to understand this.

Now, we come to that other verse we thought of. There is no partiality with God. If you're a father, and you're a father without partiality, you would do to, for every one of your children, what you do for your firstborn.

I sought to do that as a father myself, because I try to follow God's example. And I want to say, when you realize the implication of this, that whatever God did for Jesus, he would do for me, and you. If he didn't, he would be partial.

There is no partiality with God. It's amazing to believe that, that he would care for me, just like he cared for Jesus. That he would love me like he loved him.

He would plan my life, just like he planned the life of Jesus. Isn't that amazing? It really is. To think that, I've thought of this for example, that many times in the, particularly in the Gospel of Matthew, and in other places in the Gospels, it says, this happened, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

For example, he was born in Bethlehem, because it is written in Micah chapter 5, four or five hundred years before he was born, that he had to be born in Bethlehem. He couldn't be born anywhere. He couldn't be born in Nazareth.

He had to be born in Bethlehem, because that's how God's plan was there. And you know, God would move Caesar, out there in Rome, to pass a silly order, that all those who, when a census is being taken, everybody's got to go to the place where they were, their hometown. Now why do you need to go to your hometown to get a census? You're just counting the population.

It's a crazy order. But it's because of that, that Joseph and Mary moved, went all the way to Bethlehem, because it was written five hundred years before that, Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem. You know the amazing things God will do.

He can move a Caesar, to fulfill his scripture, what's written in scripture. And now what's the implication of that for you and me? He can move anybody on the earth, to fulfill his plan for my life. I don't know whether you believe it, I believe it with all my heart.

I'll tell you this, if you believe it, it will remove so much of anxiety, fear, insecurity, and so many things from your life. He'll care for me. He cares for you.

He cares for your children. Because he's a father. As he cared for Jesus.

You know that other place where it says, Herod was scheming and planning to kill the babies in Bethlehem, because he wanted to get rid of Jesus. You think you can take God by surprise? Oh no. Long before Herod's soldiers came there, God moved and took Joseph and Mary, out of that place to some other place.

And the soldiers came, the nest was empty. He had gone. I've experienced situations like that myself.

And I'll tell you, when you serve the Lord, you don't have to fear. You don't have to fear that, you know, somebody scheming and planning evil against you like Herod, and scheming to hurt you. When he comes to hurt you, he won't be able to.

Because God has already worked out something to save you from that. You know, these are the things that happen when we believe that we're younger brothers of Jesus. That God is our dad, just like Jesus.

He was Jesus' dad. The word we find in, where it says in Romans 8, that the Holy Spirit cries out within us, Abba, Father. Now, Abba is not an English word.

It's a Hebrew word. And the correct translation of that into English would be, Daddy. It's the word which little children say, Daddy.

Have you ever looked up into your heavenly Father's face and said, I believe that many Christians have never done that. They don't believe that God looks at them with delight. You know, when it says in the book of Zephaniah, that's one of those wonderful Old Testament books, which I would encourage you to read, like many other books in the end of the Old Testament.

Remember, you're going to meet Zephaniah in heaven. And he'll ask you, did you read the little book I wrote? It's only three pages. You didn't take time to read it.

And Habakkuk. And Nahum. And Micah.

You're going to meet all these people. You better read it before you get there. I'm serious.

You're going to meet these people. They're all in heaven. And you're going to meet them.

And it will be highly embarrassing if you meet them and you have to tell them, sorry, I didn't even know you wrote a book. Okay, listen to this. Zephaniah chapter 3, and verse 17.

The Lord your God is in your midst. Zephaniah chapter 3, verse 17. A victorious warrior.

He will exult over you with joy. Just meditate on that for a moment. Don't move on.

He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. And you look around and say, he can't be referring to me. It must be somebody else.

No, he's referring to you. He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. Can you think of how Abraham picked up Isaac? I mean, he had waited 100 years for a little child to be born.

Can you imagine how he looked at Isaac? That's how God looks at us. The Bible says in Isaiah 49, and verse 15. God's not only a father.

He's also a mother. See, God is sexless. He's father and mother combined.

That's why when he made someone in his image, he had to make him man and woman. Otherwise his full image would not come through. That's why I believe we need to esteem women as equal with men.

Because the image of God is seen only in both together. And so God's, we call God father, but he's got all the characteristics of a mother too. Because it says in Isaiah 49, verse 15.

Can a woman forget? Can a mother? Isaiah 49, verse 15. Forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb. Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

You know, when God wants to speak about his love, the best example that he can take on earth is that of a mother. Because there's absolutely no love on earth to surpass that. It's totally selfless.

Totally selfless. It's the mother's love for a child. And that's the example he uses.

You know, a lot of what the world calls love from the cinema screen is selfish love. The man, the boy wants something from the girl, the girl wants something from the boy. But when you think of a mother's love, it wants absolutely nothing from the child.

He just wants to give and sacrifice and do anything. And he knows the child's going to create so many problems for it, but he still loves. And think of a woman who was married for say 15-20 years and never had a child and then she gets a child.

Can you see her face when she picks up that child which is just born? Oh, that's the type of way God looks at you. Can you believe it? He rejoices over you with shouts of joy. This is our God.

You know, many, many Christians have always, have got the feeling that God always looks at them with a frown. Oh, you're not good enough. He's always coming after them to catch them like the policeman flashing his lights behind, you know, and you know you have to pull up but you're scared.

And many people feel this God's coming after me. I don't know what I did wrong now. Or this feeling that no matter what you do, you have the feeling you're not good enough.

I remember when I was maybe 35, 36 years old, I'd been a believer for 15, 16 years. And I had that feeling about God. No matter how hard I tried, I felt he was always saying I was not good enough.

I think a lot of Christians feel that way. There's a lot of preaching that makes people feel like that. And God gave me a dream, I'll never forget it.

And in that dream, I was already in Christian work and ministry. I saw myself coming back from some tent meeting where I had preached. And I had tried my best to preach my heart out.

And as I was coming back to my room, I heard a voice behind me in the dream saying, you could have done better. That wasn't good enough. And I was discouraged in the dream.

And in the dream, I said to the Lord, I said, Lord, why is it you always seem to say this word from behind me that it's not good enough? And the Lord said to me, turn around and see who's speaking. And in my dream, I turned around, and it was a dark figure. It was the devil.

And he ran away as soon as he was identified. And I learned something that day that God never says that. Think if your little five-year-old child wants to write a birthday greeting for you, his dad, on your birthday.

And he takes a piece of paper and tries to write, happy birthday, the spelling's all wrong, the P is crooked the other way around, etc. And he comes and gives it to you, wakes you up in the morning and says, Dad, here's something I wrote for you. And you look at it, say, this is not good enough.

Is that what you'll say? Is there any father who would say that? You've got to be the devil himself if you want it to speak. If you speak to a child who is trying to express his love to you, do you think God is worse than that? When you try to do something right, you've messed it up. How many of us have tried to do something for the Lord and it didn't go right? How does God look at you? That's happened to me many times.

In your service for the Lord, so many times we say the wrong thing or we are misunderstood, we made mistakes, we bungled. And I see that I come to God and say, Lord, I tried. I slipped up.

I'm sorry. He always says, forget it. Let's move on.

I want you to know that. God's a father. He's not a judge.

He's not a policeman. In the Old Testament, they never knew him like this. We read in the Old Testament that there was one part of the temple that was blocked off called the Most Holy Place.

That's where God dwelt. And there was a veil there. And that was to teach people that you can't go in there.

Nobody could go in there. Because, you know, people had sinned. And until Christ shed his blood, nobody could get into God's presence.

That's what he was trying to teach them. And so they never knew who was behind that veil. Was it a policeman? Was it a judge? They never knew.

Till Jesus tore that veil. It says the veil was torn when Jesus died. And Jesus explained, He's not a policeman.

It's your dad inside. Go in and meet him. Go and sit on his lap.

Enjoy him. Do you enjoy God? You know, in my early days, I never enjoyed God. I'll tell you.

It was a ritual. I had to read the Bible because I was told that's the thing Christians do. Get up in the morning and read the Bible for half an hour.

But, I'll tell you how I have come to know God in these last few years. He's the most wonderful person in the universe. If you knew, if you really know him, no one on earth can compare with him.

He's so compassionate, so understanding, so mindful about the little things, you know, things that we can't share with anybody else. We can go and tell him and he understands. I often think it's one of my favorite stories in the Gospels.

It's Jesus dealing with a Samaritan woman. I never tire of talking about it. A woman who was divorced five times and now sleeping around with a man he's not even married to.

I mean, it almost sounds like 21st century. But, it was... But, this is 1st century from a despised group. You know, the Samaritans were hybrids.

They were not pure Jews and the Jews would despise them so much they wouldn't even walk through that town. And, here was Jesus caring for this woman because he knew that nobody cared for her. I don't know whether you know that in all eastern countries and this is true in the villages in India too, women come to draw well, draw from the water from the well early in the morning because they need water right from 5 o'clock in the morning for that day's work.

Why did this woman come at noon? Because she must have been so teased and harassed by all the other women when she came with them at 5 o'clock in the morning. She decided, I better go when there's nobody there. She was an oppressed and you know, she wanted probably to turn.

I'm sure she wanted to turn from her ways. There are many sinful people, many people who have messed up their life and who want to turn but they don't know what to do. They don't know whom to go to.

And Jesus was led by the Spirit to sit at that well at 12. You know, whenever I've read that story I say, Lord, please make me so sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit that when you tell me to go somewhere, I'll go. And when you tell me to stay somewhere, I'll stay.

Because there may be some needy person you want me to reach. Someone who's despised and misunderstood by everybody else. And Jesus explained the Father to her.

And do you know that Jesus used that woman to bring a revival in Samaria, which he couldn't use his 12 disciples for. That's amazing. Really amazing.

That's how God is. God is a Father. He cares for us.

He's interested in every little detail of our life. And if only you knew that. I believe it would change everything about your life in the future.

It would make you secure. It would make you stop being so critical of other people. Because you see how compassionate God's been with you.

It would be very difficult for you to go around being critical of others. You may disagree with people. A lot of people I disagree with.

A lot of people I can't work together with. But I say, I'm not here to judge them. God is their judge.

Let me show you one verse in closing. It's in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. It's speaking about the last days.

It's speaking about the time when the Antichrist is going to rule on the earth. And the Antichrist is described as someone Daniel chapter 11 verse 32. Daniel chapter 11 verse 32.

With smooth words he will turn people to godlessness. But in that day there will be some people who know their God. And they will be strong.

Those are the people who are going to be strong in the last days. Those who know their God. Lay hold of eternal life.

Make it your life's passion to know this wonderful God more and more. That's why I encourage you to read the Bible. I came to know God through the Bible.

You know when Jesus was on earth, the Pharisees had portrayed God in a wrong way to everybody. And Jesus had to clear that wrong understanding. In all religions all false religions, and that includes counterfeit Christianity.

God is portrayed as someone to be feared someone to be afraid of in a wrong way. I don't mean revered and respected. I'm talking about a fear.

They're afraid. People go on pilgrimages to appease this God. People give money in offerings to appease this God who may be angry with them.

And this God has made all types of rules and regulations that if you don't follow it down to the little detail you're punished. This is a wrong picture of God completely. Jesus you know completely wiped out that image and showed God as a father.

He says God is a good God. If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him? That's why I believe that my heavenly father will only give me good things. And let me tell you this I don't want to make anybody feel condemned but I personally do not believe that God gives sickness to anyone.

Now I'll tell you why. If you're a father would you give sickness to your children? Any father here would give sickness to his children? Jesus said you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more shall your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him? I believe that. Now when you don't believe it and you got a wrong picture of God that God sitting there in heaven and thinking what shall I give to that child of mine? Tuberculosis perhaps or what about that other daughter of mine? Cancer.

And what about that other one? A road accident. Is that what God sitting in heaven and planning? My dear brothers and sisters this is a false God that the devil has put before so many Christians. He's a liar the devil.

God is a good God. Jesus taught that and I know all the fears I had when I didn't believe this. Now let me, I haven't completed we read in the Bible about a man who was one of God's greatest servants on earth the apostle Paul and he got a sickness he called it a thorn in the flesh in 2nd Corinthians 12 he called it a messenger from Satan now when you get a messenger from Satan what should you do?

Pray, that's what he did Father get rid of this, this is not from you Jesus said no he prayed a second time, Lord this is not from you sickness is not from God take it away he said no he prayed a third time Jesus said no he said it's a messenger of Satan, I don't give sicknesses but sometimes I allow it to remain because it's gonna serve a purpose in your life it's gonna make you humble because you've been so mightily used that you're in danger of pride you need something to humble you and don't be afraid I'm gonna give you grace to overcome this the sickness will remain you'll remain sick probably till the end of your life but you're gonna have grace to be able to triumph over it so that in spite of your sickness you rejoice and give thanks to God in spite of your sickness you serve the

Lord in spite of your sickness you don't go around looking for you don't go around looking for everybody to sympathize with you, you bless them instead so whenever I've been sick in any way I said Lord either you heal me or give me something better than sickness if you decide that you're gonna keep that sickness then you gotta give me grace I remember a little story I heard of a man who was thinking about this particular message of Jesus to Paul that I'm not gonna take away that thorn but I'm gonna give you grace and he saw himself in a dream or a vision in a boat trying to cross a river and as he was trying to cross the river there was a hidden rock underneath his boat was always hitting against it he couldn't go across he couldn't go across in his dream and this was the obstacle or

sickness whatever he had in his life he couldn't go across he couldn't go across and he kept on praying Lord take away this rock take away this rock and the Lord said no I won't take away the rock I'll raise the level of the water and you'll go across my grace will come to a higher level in your life so that despite that infirmity you'll be a conqueror you will rejoice and you will bless others and you will be a greater testimony to me with that thorn in the flesh than if you didn't have it so remember this that whatever situation it may be don't ever believe the devil's lie that God gives you anything bad anything that you would not give your children God will not give you because he's a good God he's a father does this apply to everyone here? it can if you will open your heart and

honestly acknowledge that you do not know him as your father but you can know him today it doesn't take time you know you can be born in a moment and then there's growth where you lay hold of eternal life more and more and more but if you've never made that beginning in your life you can make it today where you come to God and say Lord I am a sinner I acknowledge it I cannot come to you with my sin until the sin is removed the guilt of years of disobedience rebelling against you I want you to remove it and there's only one way for it to be removed that's why Christ died on the cross he died so that all your sins can be forgiven this very moment he shed his blood that your sin can be cleansed so that you can come and be know God as your father that's bar heads

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