

(Manitoba 2001) God Is Our Loving Father

by Zac Poonen

The New Covenant offers us a new start and a chance to deal with our past, but we must be willing to make amends and trust in God's mercy and understanding.

Duration: 1:13:03

Scripture: Romans 6:4, Hebrews 8:10

Topics: "Blessing Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of representing God to our children as fathers. He highlights the characteristic of God being impartial and encourages listeners to build a strong foundation in their faith. The speaker also discusses the significance of salvation and the need to testify about accepting Christ. He uses the example of Zacchaeus, who repented and made amends for his unrighteous earnings. The sermon concludes with a reminder that believers were bought with the blood of Jesus and should not become slaves to anyone but Him.

Transcript

We'd like to turn back this evening to Hebrews and chapter 8. Yesterday evening, if you remember, we were seeing the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. And we saw that the old had become obsolete. And in that time, he said, it's growing ready and is old and is ready to disappear.

It's already disappeared as far as we're concerned today. That's what it says in Hebrews 8.13. And God has established a new agreement with man. And what we looked at yesterday was dealing with man's sins.

The first thing that God has to deal with when he meets us is with our past life. The guilt of our sin, the memory and remembrance of many things that we have committed against God, that we are conscious of and that we feel guilty about, and that tends to condemn us. That's the first thing that God has to deal with.

And he deals with it through the blood of Jesus Christ. Through, not through covering our sin, but cleansing it. And not only cleansing it, but the Bible says that we are justified by his blood and that there is no need for us to remember any of our past life because God says, I will not remember your sins and iniquities anymore.

That's the first part of the New Covenant. That's what we looked at in Hebrews 8.12. We didn't look at all of the New Covenant. We just saw that first, we can say, foundation.

What we laid yesterday was a foundation where we totally dealt with our past. And if you don't totally deal with your past like the New Covenant says you should, it'll be like not laying a proper foundation for a building and every floor that you build, you're going to have cracks on it. Your entire Christian life is going to be unstable, uncertain.

You can be 20 years a Christian and up there you can have a crack in the wall, wondering, am I saved or lost? And the problem was in the foundation that right at the beginning of your Christian life, you didn't deal once and for all totally with your past. I believe if you have never dealt with your past, please deal with it now so that you never have to deal with it again. You have to finish with it once and for all.

Don't insult the blood of Jesus Christ by saying that your sin is too big for the blood to cleanse. That's a terrible insult to Christ. It says, where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more.

There is no sin which cannot be cleansed in the blood of Christ. But the devil would like you to believe that your sin is so great that it cannot be cleansed, that the memory of some horrible experience you had in the past, some horrible sin that you committed is so filthy, so bad, that even the blood of Christ cannot cleanse it. You know, I believe that you cannot offer a greater insult to God than that.

Some of you think it's humility. That's not humility. It's arrogance and pride.

You are insulting God by saying that your sin is greater, so great the blood of Christ cannot cleanse it, when God says the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. That's how we overcome the devil. We also need to deal with people whom we have hurt.

The Bible says that Zacchaeus, when Jesus came to him, it says he stopped outside his house. That's what it says. He stopped.

And that indicates that as Jesus came to his house, he stood in front of the door and said, Wait a minute, Lord, before you get in. I've got to settle something before you enter this house. I built this house with stolen money.

There are a lot of things in this house which have been built with money I have earned unrighteously. And I want to settle it before you, Son of God, enter this house. He was an upright man.

And he said, Lord, I'm going to settle it. Every person I've cheated, I'm going to pay him back with interest. And to make sure it's not less, I'm going to pay him back four times.

The Old Testament law said add 20%. Zacchaeus decided to add 300% and pay back four times what he had stolen from every person. He stood there before his house and told the Lord, I'm going to do it.

And he said, There are a lot of other people whom I've stolen from. I don't know where they are today. I don't know where they live.

I've got no idea of their mailing address. But I can't keep that money either because it is not righteously earned. And I'm going to give half of my money to the poor so that what is left in my bank account will only be what I have righteously earned so that in the day of judgment, nobody will be able to stand and say, Lord, this man has got money in his bank account which belongs to me.

Zacchaeus settled it. Have you settled it? Have you got a single cent in your bank account which you did not righteously earn? Money which belongs to somebody else? Things you have borrowed in your house from somebody? Implements, kitchen items, books which are just lying there, which you have not bothered to return? He who is faithful in that which is little will be faithful in much. These are the things that people are careless about.

Be as zealous as Zacchaeus was. And Jesus said, Today salvation has come to this house. I never see him saying that anywhere in the Gospel.

That's the only time he ever said it. Salvation has come to this house. And Jesus will say that even today.

Now, Zacchaeus hadn't returned all that money. He probably took four or five years to go around to every single house to return that money, to clear his debts and to pay back what he had taken wrongfully. But he didn't have to wait four or five years for the assurance of his salvation.

That's the wonderful thing about God. It's not after you've gone and settled all those accounts and after you've gone and asked everybody's forgiveness. The moment you've decided, Jesus says salvation has come.

Isn't that encouraging? That means Jesus wants you to be sure of your salvation before you get out of your seat tonight. Even if you have not yet had the opportunity to go and apologize, to go and return those things, that may take five years, never mind. And some of it you may never be able to settle.

And God understands that. You don't have to torture your mind. Don't let the devil take this message and torture you with some restitution that you can never make in your life.

God understands. He's not a torturer. He's a father.

He knows what you can do. I'll never forget when a man wrote to me in India once, a very poor man. He owed a fantastic amount of money.

He was a very, very poor man and he owed about 30,000 rupees. I mean, imagine if you owe \$30,000 to someone and you're a very poor man earning \$250 a month. That's what he said.

He said, I can't pay this back. I'll never be able to pay this back in my life. I said, never mind.

Can you pay back 10 rupees a month? And if you keep doing that, well, it's going to take you, what's that, 250 years to return all that money? You're not going to live 250 years. You'll die long before that. You'll die with your debt paid only 10%, perhaps.

But God will see your heart and will account it to you as if you have cleared all your debt. There's a wonderful promise about that in 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 12, if it brings comfort to any of you who are tortured by such thoughts. 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 12.

It's a wonderful verse which teaches us that if you have a willing heart, if you have a willing heart, it is accepted according to what a man has and not according to what he doesn't have. It's accepted according to what a man has and not according to what he doesn't have. That means, if you've got a willingness, God sees how much you're able to do.

And that's good enough. It doesn't matter if you're not able to do the whole thing. He sees there was a willing heart and you had to pay back \$30,000, but you died having paid back only \$3,000, but you tried your best, God says, as far as I'm concerned, it's clear.

And that applies to a lot of other areas in your life. God will never ask you to do what He knows you cannot do. If you've got a willing heart, a heart that desires to please God, don't let the devil torture you saying, you're not doing this thing, you're not doing the other thing, and you haven't done this thing and you haven't done the other thing.

That devil doesn't even try those tricks on me anymore. I told him straight to his face what God's word says. Do you know that whenever the devil came to Jesus, Jesus just said, this is what God's word says and the devil never tried that on Jesus again.

The thing is, when the devil comes to you with something, you've got no word of scripture to quote back to him like Jesus, and that's why you get troubled again and again and again with the same old thing. You've got to know a scripture to tell the devil. Jesus knew exactly what scripture to tell the devil every time he came with a temptation.

And that's why it's important that you get to know the scriptures. Whenever the devil comes to me with a temptation, I give him a word from scripture. And he usually never comes back with the same thing again, because he knows, I know what God's word says, God's word is eternal truth.

He will never allow, ask you to do what he knows you cannot do. Please remember that. God's not a tyrant.

I will not put a five ton weight on my son and son's head and say, carry it. I know you can't do it. God will never ask you to do something he knows you can't do.

That's impossible. There may be a lot of things in your life which are such a mess in the past that you can't even straighten it out. Never mind.

God doesn't ask you to sort all those things out because he knows you can't. If there's a willing mind, he will ask you only to sort out what he knows you can. And he wants you to be as sure of your salvation as Zacchaeus was that day when the Lord said, today salvation has come to this house.

Do you think Zacchaeus had any doubt in his mind after that, that salvation had come? After Jesus himself had said that? The devil may have come to him the next day and said, Zacchaeus, are you so sure you're saved? He said, well, Jesus said, salvation has come. I believe his word. He may not have felt like it, but he didn't act by his feeling.

He acted by what Jesus said. I remember in my life how I was tossed about for so many years, for six years at least. Over a hundred times I must have asked Jesus to come into my heart in every meeting that I went to as a teenager.

And all those teenage years I struggled with assurance of salvation. Was I saved? Was I not saved? Did Jesus accept me? Had he accepted me or not accepted me, I was never sure. Till one day I read John 6.37. John 6.37 says, Jesus said, him that cometh to me, I will never cast out.

And I asked myself, have I come to Jesus? And I said, Lord, I've come a hundred times, not just once. And what I saw from that verse was that if I had done my part, it was again an insult to Jesus to say that he had not done his part. You know, that's what a person who has come to the Lord is saying when he says, I'm not sure whether the Lord has accepted me.

I met people like that. They say, have you come to the Lord? They say, yes. Has the Lord accepted you? I don't know.

But what does God's word say? Him that cometh to me, I'll never cast out. In other words, you were faithful to do your part, but the Lord Jesus is not faithful to do his part. Right? Isn't that what you're saying? And when they see it like that, they see what a terrible sin it is to say that I did my part, but he didn't do his part.

Can that be? Are you supposed to be more faithful than Jesus? Him that cometh to me, I'll never cast out. Believe it. I believed it 42 years ago, and my life was anchored that day and has never shaken since then.

It's not that I've never fallen. I've fallen many times, and I've done a lot of stupid things since that day. But I came to him, and he never left me.

He always brought me back. You can be sure. It's very, very important.

There are sins and iniquities I will remember no more. Don't let the devil keep you uncertain, uncertain, uncertain, uncertain. He wants you to know that you are saved.

The apostle John said, These things have I written unto you, that you may know that you have eternal life. Have you read that verse in 1 John, in chapter 5? Let me read this to you. 1 John, chapter 5, verse 13.

These things I have written unto you, who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know, in order that you may be certain that you have eternal life. It is very, very important. Don't ever try to build a superstructure without getting the foundation right.

This day salvation has come, in order that you may know you have eternal life. So that's important. And I want to say this also.

Nowadays, it's good to give a testimony, to tell people, I've accepted Christ, Christ is my Saviour, Jesus has come into my life, and I've finished with my old life. But do you know, if you read the Acts of the Apostles, when people were saved, you don't see many instances of their getting up and giving a testimony. That's a very good thing.

The Bible says we must confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. But do you know what they did in the Acts of the Apostles? Today we give a testimony. Do you know what they did in the Acts of the Apostles when they were saved? They got baptized.

That was their testimony. It was an action. They stood before people, and one of the other believers immersed them in water, and said, this man, his old man is buried, and he's raised up a new person in Christ.

And he walked out with a cheerful face. That was his testimony. That's the meaning of baptism.

You see, in Romans chapter 6, that's how they settled their fests. Romans chapter 6 says this, Therefore, verse 4, we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from

the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. The book of Ephesians has got one little expression that is found very often in that book.

It's the phrase, In Christ. That's a very wonderful phrase. I am in Christ.

And the Bible says that God chose me and you before creating the world. That's what it says in Ephesians 1. Before the foundation of the world, He chose me in Christ. We can understand that because God knows the future.

And looking into the future, He knew every person that would ever come to Christ through the ages. Because He could see all the way up to the end of time. He knew you by name.

Before you were born. He knew that at a particular time, you would come to Christ. You would give your life to Him.

And therefore, He chose you before creating Adam and Eve. Do you know that you were in the mind of God before Adam and Eve were created? Way back in eternity past, He placed you in Christ. The reality was fulfilled when you actually accepted Christ.

But it was like this. You are placed, like this, I place this paper inside this Bible, in Christ. Okay? Now when I dip this Bible in water, that paper gets dipped too.

Because it's inside the Bible. When I pull it out of the water, this paper comes out too. That's what happened when we were put into Christ.

When Christ died on the cross, because I was in Christ, from before the foundation of the world, I died with Him. When He was buried in the grave, I was buried with Him. When He was raised up from the dead, I was raised up with Him.

Now don't worry if you can't understand that. My digestive system works okay even though I can't understand it. There are a lot of doctors who can explain their digestive systems, but sometimes their digestive systems don't work.

It's not understanding that makes your digestive system work. Understanding is good, but it's not necessary. We just believe what God's word says, that your old man was crucified with Christ.

Lord, I believe it. I don't understand it, but I believe it. It's true.

I was buried with Christ and I was raised up with Christ is a truth that the Bible says in Romans chapter 6, and it leads on to a life of victory over sin. This is the new covenant. There was no death, burial and resurrection in the old covenant.

No. That's why there was no baptism in the old covenant. This is a new covenant thing.

It is testifying that I have finished with my old life. You are testifying in baptism that your old man is dead. Now, some people ask me, when should I be baptized? Well, when should you bury a man? What's the answer? When he is dead.

Right. It's a crime to bury a man who is not dead, right? It's an absolute crime. How in the world can you baptize a person who is not born again? That's a crime.

The fellow is not dead yet. A lot of people are doing that. They are baptizing babies that are not dead, grown up people that are not dead.

It's a crime. The old man must be dead. Second question, How long do you keep a dead man before burying him? One year? Two years? We usually bury them the same day in India.

I don't know what you do in Canada. How is it there are so many people who say my old man is dead and they are still hanging around without being buried? You better bury him quickly. Don't wait for a special funeral ceremony or something.

If there is one happening somewhere, just go and get buried. Testify publicly to the demons that you have finished with your old man. Let them see it.

Let those demons know that you don't belong to him anymore. Let the devil know that. Let the angels in heaven rejoice at one more person testifying, I died with Christ and my old man is buried.

It's finished. And I'll tell you something, you will come out of that water resurrected, a new person. Then there is one more question.

How do we bury a man? Do you bury a man by sprinkling sand on his head? Have you ever seen that? I've never seen that in my life. I don't know how you bury people here. There is only one way we bury people in India and it is not by sprinkling sand on their head.

We dig a grave and put him right under six feet. He is completely out of sight. Is there any other form of burial? No.

How in the world did Christendom invent other forms of baptism? I don't know. I'll tell you one more thing. Do you know that the word baptism is not an English word? It's not an English word at all.

Like hypocrite. Do you know hypocrite is not an English word? Hypocrite is a Greek word. And if you go to Greece and talk about hypocrites, they understand what you mean.

An actor. That's all it means. Someone who is acting.

When Jesus said don't be a hypocrite, all he meant was don't act. Don't pretend that you are something which you are not really. Don't pretend to be more spiritual than you really are.

They understood it. We get this big word hypocrite and we don't even know what it means. The same thing with baptism.

You know 400 years ago, I've read this somewhere in history. There was this man called King James in England who decided to get the Bible translated into English. That's why it's called the King James Version.

1611. And he got a lot of these bishops and leaders of the church together and he said okay we want a new translation of the Bible and you fellas must translate it. And some of these people were God-fearing people who translated it.

Scholars in Hebrew and Greek. But they were under the authority of the king. And the king gave them certain rules and regulations concerning this translation.

And one of those rules was whatever you translate, don't rock the traditions of the church. So one of these things, that was one of the things these translators had to keep in mind lest they lose their head. And they came translating faithfully, faithfully till they came in the New Testament to this word baptizo or bapto which is a plain simple Greek word which means dip, immerse.

Have you read that verse in Revelation chapter 19 that Jesus Christ is dressed in a garment dipped in blood? Baptized in blood. That's the word. They translated it correctly there.

Dipped in the blood. But when they came to this phrase with Jesus where this word baptizo and they said boy, if we translate that exactly as it means it's really going to shake this church of England. Because that's not what the people are doing.

They're sprinkling babies in that church. At the same time, they could not translate it sprinkling because that would go against their conscience. That's not what that word meant.

So they invented a word baptism which nobody knew what it meant. Baptized. And so the people got the King James Bible these simple people in those days in England and they read this word baptized.

That wasn't in any dictionary. Baptized. What does that mean? And they scratched their heads and said well, I suppose that's what they do in the church with the little babies.

And that's how they fooled everybody and they've been fooling everybody for 400 years. And if you don't believe me go and look up any Greek-English dictionary and they'll tell you that baptizo means immerse, dip. It doesn't mean anything else.

You cannot testify to burial any other way. Well, that's just in passing. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus never forced people to hear. You hear God saying something and you twist it and twist it and try to manipulate God's word and try to make it mean what it doesn't mean you can do what you like. But the plain, simple meaning is that.

And I say, I thank you Father you've hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent and you've revealed them to little babes. And those who come to the Scriptures like little babes they have no problem in understanding it. Baptism is a break with the past.

It's finishing with the past. You know, I baptized my mother when she was 76 years old. She grew up in the Orthodox Church and she was born again later in life.

And she was attending our church and I never told her to get baptized. That was because I don't believe in forcing people to do it. And one day she came to me and said, I was reading my Bible this morning and God spoke to me.

It's so wonderful. Tell me, what did God speak to you? And she said, I was reading in Acts chapter 19. And I saw there that there were certain people who had taken the baptism of John and when Paul spoke to them and they realized that the baptism of John was not Christian baptism he baptized them again, properly.

It says in Acts 19.5 in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And she said, I realized that my child baptism was not a baptism at all. Now I'd like to be baptized properly.

I was delighted. And I baptized her in the name of the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. You know, sometimes people have that question.

Well, wasn't I baptized once? Was it properly? Was it Christian baptism? Or some other? If it wasn't Christian baptism, you haven't been baptized at all. You can be baptized only once, properly, the way God said it in His Word. And if you've done it like that once, then you don't need to do it again.

But if you haven't done it like that, you've got to do it to finish with your past. That is the thing. There's an expression in English which says, burning your bridges behind you.

You know, that means you come from that land of sin and wickedness and all that, and you took a bridge and you crossed over into the land of righteousness and godliness and holiness. But if you keep that bridge there, you may be tempted to go back. And the best thing to do is burn that bridge so that there's no more connection between you and that world behind you.

That's the meaning of burning your bridges behind you and you don't ever go back again. That's what we testify to in baptism. I've finished with my old life.

I've got a new direction to go. We are raised up so that we can walk in newness of life. And once we have finished with the past, let's turn back now to Hebrews chapter 8. It says here that in this new covenant, the Lord says, please read this in verse 11.

The last part of verse 10 says, I will be their God. Notice the I will. Different from the old covenant, thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt not.

No. I will. What is the first I will we saw? Verse 12.

I will not, I'll be merciful to their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. That was the first I will. A dual I will.

I will be merciful to their iniquities, I will remember their sin no more. That deals with the past. We testify to it in baptism.

We burnt our bridges behind us and we press on to the future. Okay. Now we go to another second I will.

In the last part of verse 10, God says, I will be their God and they shall be my people and they shall not, verse 11, they shall not teach everyone, his fellow citizen and everyone his brother saying, know the Lord for all shall know me. The Lord says, all shall know me from the least to the greatest. What is he talking about? What does it mean to know him? They could not know him under the old covenant.

They only knew the rules and regulations, the laws. They could not know the Lord. They did not know God's will.

If they wanted to know something, they would have to go to a prophet. Even David the king would have to go to a prophet under the old covenant. You read that many times in the Old Testament that great kings wanted to find out what was God's will about some particular thing and they would go to the prophet and the prophet would say, come back up tomorrow or after two days and I will tell you what God says.

But under the new covenant, listen to this, you got to understand this verse in the light of the old covenant. If you were a Jewish person that had grown up under the old covenant, if you ever wanted to know God's

will about something, you would have to go to a prophet. You would have to go to find out where the prophet is.

He may be many hundreds of miles away. You got to take a journey there and you got to wait till he finds out God's will and comes and tells you this is what the Lord says. But that's because it's only that prophet who had the Holy Spirit upon him and all you Jews, all the Jews didn't have the Holy Spirit.

But now in the new covenant the Holy Spirit's poured out on everybody. What was only for the prophets, only for the kings, now it's for everyone. And when the Holy Spirit's poured upon everyone, the Lord says, all will know Me personally.

You don't have to go through the prophet anymore. There is no mediator now. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2, 4 and 5, there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Only one mediator. Throughout history, throughout church history, Satan has always tried to produce a second mediator. But the Bible says there is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus said, I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through Me. We can go directly to Jesus Christ now and know the Father.

All shall know Me. And notice this, what do you read in your Bible in Hebrews 8, 11? Now usually, the expression we use in English is from the greatest to the least. Right? But here, the Holy Spirit uses from the least to the greatest.

Why does He do that? Teaching us that even the newly born babe in Christ can know God personally. That's the least to the greatest. Everyone can know God as Father.

We can know God as our Father. We can go through Jesus Christ to know God as our Father. We can know the will of God now.

We don't have to go through a second mediator. You know that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that you got to go through Mary to Jesus. Or through their leader to Jesus.

You can't go to Jesus and find out His will directly. You got to go and ask the preacher or the pastor what is God's will. This is back to the Old Testament.

And I'll tell you one thing. If I had to have a second mediator, I would rather choose Mary than all these pastors and preachers who are hanging around today. Any day.

Because Mary I know at least is holy. And I don't know that about all these preachers and pastors. But thank God, I don't have to have a second mediator.

There is only one, Jesus Christ. I can go to Him directly. And I want to say to every one of you.

Now this is very important. Why is it important? Now listen. Any man, any preacher who seeks to connect you to himself and not to Christ is trying to be a second mediator between you and Christ.

Between you and God. He's trying to be another mediator. A true servant of God will never try to bring you under His authority.

He'll try to bring you under Christ's authority. He'll connect you to Jesus. Not to Himself.

And I know that because I've been in the ministry establishing churches for 25 years and I know people have tried to lean upon me and I've always pushed them off. Now I say, I won't allow that. I'm going to get you connected to Christ.

Do you have people connecting you to themselves? They are false preachers. Let me tell you a story I heard in India. There was a young girl and a young man who were very much in love with each other.

But the young man had to travel far away for a very important job that he had to do for about a year or so. And he said, as soon as I come back I'll get married to you. But he loved her so much that every day he would write a long letter to his sweetheart and beloved.

From that far distant place he'd send a letter. And every day this girl saw the postman, the mailman. In India the mailman comes and delivers the letter in your home, knocks at the door.

Many homes don't have mailboxes outside. They knock at the door in villages and come and open the door and give you the letter. So every day she would hear the knock on the door and the mailman would come with this letter.

The next day again the mailman would come with this letter. And the next day... And she was so delighted. And she got to see this mailman every day and every day and began to get friendly with the mailman.

And in about 7 or 8 months she got married to the mailman. You know this has happened to many many Christians. Somebody brings you a message from God and you're so blessed by it.

And then you get another message from God and you're so blessed by it. And then you get another message from God and you're so blessed by it. And finally you don't have any connection with Jesus.

You got married to the mailman. You got under the authority of your pastor or your preacher. You don't have any more connection with Jesus.

How tragic. Now it's true that we are blessed by the teachings of godly men. And if the apostle Paul was anywhere around today I would have traveled any distance to go and meet him and fellowship with him.

And if his tapes were available I'd certainly listen to his tapes as much as possible. But I know that Paul would lead me beyond himself to Christ. And that's why it's safe.

You be careful of a man who preaches to you in such a way that he gets you attached to himself. You be careful of a book that directs you to the author and not to Jesus and the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. You know we need to listen to those type of messages that will draw us beyond the man to Jesus.

That will make Jesus glorious in our eyes. That will make us devoted to Jesus. That will help us to know God as our Father.

We're not living in Old Testament days where we've got to go to Elisha or some other prophet to find out what God is telling us. We can go directly. That is a new covenant promise.

All shall know Me personally. You don't need a secretary. You don't need a mediator.

God places shepherds, teachers, apostles, prophets in the church. But the purpose of all these ministries is to exhort you, challenge you, teach you through preaching, literature, tapes, every possible means, but to connect you to Jesus. Not to connect you to a man.

And we get into lots and lots of problems when we allow ourselves to come under the authority of a man who rules us. Have you ever read this verse? 1 Corinthians and chapter 7. 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Wonderful verse. It's a verse that I read as a young man and I've sought to follow it all my life.

I would encourage you to follow it. 1 Corinthians 7, 23. Read it.

Remember it all your life. You were bought with a price. The blood of Jesus Christ.

Don't ever become the servant of any man. Don't ever become a slave of a man who tells you what to do, where to go, how to do this, how to do the other thing, what to buy, what not to buy. Jesus purchased you with His blood.

Why in the world are you slaves to some man? If you want to be a slave, be a slave to the one who gave His blood for you. That's the one you should be a slave to. That's the word of God.

You were bought with a price. Why do you let somebody else possess you? If I went to a shop, a store, and I bought that chair, paying good money for it, how can you take it? If I bought that car, paying good money for it, how can somebody else take that? That is theft. I paid the price.

It's mine. And Jesus says, I paid the price for you. You're mine.

Why are you the slave of somebody else? Just because Jesus is such a good master. He doesn't catch you by the neck and say, come here. But He paid the price for you.

And He says, I bought you. I bought you with My blood. You belong to Me.

You have no right to be the slave of any man. That's what the Bible says. Don't ever become the slaves of any man.

And I want to tell you, after 42 years of being a Christian, that word has liberated me. I refuse to be the slave of any man. I have voluntarily, sometimes when I've seen a really godly brother, now and then, they are rare nowadays, but sometimes when I've seen a really godly brother, who I know whose words can guide me.

And especially when I see that he does not want to attach me to himself, but to lead me beyond himself to Christ. I want to be with that godly brother as much as possible. I want to hear him.

Because his words challenge me. And rarely when I come across such a godly brother in my life, in my younger days, I'd be with such people. But they were rare.

They're rare even today. I would read their writings. If there were tapes, I would listen to them.

Because they led me beyond themselves to Christ. And would make me a better slave of Jesus Christ. But that was my own choice.

They never sat on my head saying, you've got to submit to me. You know, that's the difference between authority in Babylon, which is a religious system, and authority in Jerusalem, the true church. In Babylon

and in the world, authority is imposed from above.

I'm your authority. I'm your pope. I'm your leader.

You better submit to me. I'm your pastor. I'm your bishop.

I'm this, I'm that. I'm your superintendent. And you better submit to me.

That's how it is in the world. And that's how it is in Babylonian Christianity. In the true church of God, also there is authority, but it is not imposed from above.

It's accepted from beneath. That means I voluntarily choose to say, I want to submit to the authority of this godly brother, because he will lead me closer to Christ. I'm not his slave.

He doesn't want me to be his slave. I would never submit to the authority of a man who wants me to be his slave, because he could never lead me to Christ. He'll just lead me to himself.

But where I see a man seeking to lead me beyond himself to Christ, it's like a child who knows that being under the authority of his father would be a protection for him when he's a small child. That's why God places us under parents when we are small children. But not that we should forever be under their authority, that even when we are grown up, that we cannot stand on our own feet.

That's not God's will. He wants us to grow up. But that type of authority is what we see in Jerusalem.

And all the verses about authority, obey your leaders, submit to them, and all the verses about authority that are spoken in the New Testament speak about this type of authority. Accepted from beneath, not imposed from above. Anything imposed from above is not from God.

God does not impose even His authority. Do you remember that time when it says in John chapter 6 that some people left Jesus because His preaching was too hard? They didn't like that and they left Him. Did He run after them? Did He tell them, Hey, you can't go away.

It says in John chapter 6 that some people who were His disciples, verse 66, withdrew and were no longer with Him anymore. What did He do? All those people left Him and there were twelve left. He didn't go after those fellows and say, Come back each one of you.

You are under My authority. He never said that. And to these twelve who were with Him, He said, Do you fellows want to go away too? You are welcome.

See, that's what a godly man always says. You are free. You are free to go where you like.

And Simon Peter accepted authority from beneath. He said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You got the words of eternal life. Let the others go if they want.

We seek for fellowship in a godly place. That's why they came around Jesus. What I learned from that is that God gives man freedom.

Do you know that since last night, in the last 24 hours, many thousands of people have gone to hell? Just in the last 24 hours. And God allowed them to go to hell. He didn't stop them.

He didn't catch anyone by the neck and say, You can't go. You want to go to hell? Go. He gives freedom to man to do whatever he likes.

When He gave Adam and Eve, when He told Adam and Eve to go into the garden of Eden, He gave them freedom. He didn't send an angel with them to control them, to prevent them from going near the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He didn't send an angel as a spy to see where are these fellows going.

This is Babylon. Religious Babylon that seeks to control people. It's like communism controlling people.

There's a lot of it in Christendom today. God is not like that. One of the wonderful things I like about God is He gives me freedom.

Even after I was born again. If I want to give up my salvation, I can do it if I want. I have a free choice.

I'm not a robot. I'm not programmed like these planets to go round and round and round and round and round without a choice. I have a choice.

That's one of the primary marks of God's relationship with man. He gives man free will. But the devil is not like that.

I've seen numerous demon-possessed people in my life. We have many of them in India in the villages and in the cities. And one characteristic of demon-possessed people is this.

They have no control over themselves. When a demon possesses a man, he has no control. He cannot control his actions.

He does all types of things. But when the Holy Spirit fills a man, he has control over himself. I really hope you folks will understand this big difference between spirit-filling and demon-possession.

The Bible never says the spirit possesses a man. And the Bible never says that the demons fill a man. Demons always possess.

You talk about demon-possessed people, but you speak about spirit-filled people. What is the difference between the Holy Spirit filling and demon-possession? There is one thing that demons control a man. He has got no free will.

But when the Holy Spirit fills a man, the fruit of the spirit is self-control. It gives you freedom. God gives you freedom.

And a godly man will never control your life. If we were to say, this is God, here on the left side, giving total freedom to people, and here on the right side is the devil trying to control people completely. Every Christian leader is somewhere between these two.

The more he seeks to control people, the more he is like the devil. And the less he seeks to control people, the more he is like God. Please keep that in mind.

Anybody who tries to control your life is like the devil. Without a doubt. That is close to demon-possession.

There is something demonic about a religious authority trying to control your life. It is very close to demon-possession. And it will lead you to do all types of stupid things just like demon-possessed people do.

A godly man, a godly authority, will be like God over your life. He will watch over you, care for you, but he won't control your life. He will give you freedom.

He will warn you. He will say, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. The devil doesn't say that.

Jesus says that. The devil says, whether you like to hear it or not, you better listen to me. That is the devil.

And any preacher who tells you that is more like the devil than he is like God. And the sad thing is sinful, innocent believers are being led by these leaders who are more like demons than like the Holy Spirit. And there is no one to tell them the truth.

Have you understood today the difference between demon-possession and spirit-filling? Have you understood the difference between God and the devil? Have you seen that God gives you freedom, the devil gives you no freedom? Have you seen that the Bible says in the New Covenant you don't have to go to a prophet? Have you seen in Hebrews chapter 8 it says, All will know Me from the least to the greatest. Now if a father has got ten children sitting around the table or a mother has got ten children sitting around the table and the twenty-year-old boy is clamoring for her attention and the fifteen-year-old girl is clamoring for the mother's attention and the little two-month-old baby is clamoring for the mother's attention, who does she pay attention to first? Who? The baby. From the least to the greatest.

The greatest can wait. Don't let anybody tell you, Oh, you're a young believer. You can't go to God so soon.

You've got to mature. Rubbish! Garbage! From the least. Were you born again today? You've got a greater claim on coming to God than me.

He'll keep me waiting and He'll listen to you first. From the least to the greatest. This is the New Covenant.

Why do you live under the Old Covenant? The old has been abolished. It's obsolete. It's gone.

Throw it away. This is the New Covenant. You don't have to go to a prophet.

Go to God directly. He's your Father. Jesus said in John chapter 17, He said, Father, now I've finished my work on this earth.

John 17. This was His closing prayer. And He said, I've finished the work you gave me to do on this earth.

Verse 4, I've glorified you on this earth. And verse 6, I... Listen to this. John 17.6 Father, I have revealed, I have revealed, manifested, shown Your name to these people.

What was His name? What was the name that He revealed to the people? A name which nobody knew before. Father. He revealed the Father.

The Bible says in John 1 verse 18, No one has seen God at any time, but Jesus, the Son of God, has explained Him. No one has seen God as Father. Inside thee.

That most holy place in the tabernacle covered with a veil, nobody knew what God was like. They thought He was like a policeman waiting to catch them for some mistake. You know, a lot of people have got that idea of God as a policeman.

Like the patrol car waiting, hidden in the corner, waiting to see who breaks the speed limit to catch Him. That's how a lot of people are thinking that God is. He's come with His blinking light behind you and He tells you to pull up.

He's not like that, I'll tell you. Would you be scared if it was your dad's car behind you telling you to pull up? No! Whose car is behind you? Tell me! It's your father. Not a policeman.

He's not asking you to pull up to give you a ticket. He's asking you to pull up to forgive you. To bless you.

He's your father. I have revealed your name. And even after 2,000 years, I'm sorry to say, many people don't know Him as Father.

I'll tell you my testimony. When I came to Christ, I was a very insecure, shy... You won't believe it, but God is my witness, I'm speaking the truth. At 19 years of age, when I came to Christ, I was insecure, shy, frequently depressed, discouraged, totally afraid and shy ever to stand in public, even to give my testimony.

That's how I was. Wondering whether God loved me. How could God love a sinner like me? Uncertain.

Till God opened my eyes to one wonderful truth that changed my life completely. Brought perfect security. Gave me boldness.

Gave me assurance. You know what that truth was? This truth was in the Bible. I never read it in a book.

I never heard it in a tape. But I read it in the Bible. And I was wondering why I didn't see it for so many years.

And I share that with you. It's here in John 17, verse 23. In John 17, verse 23, Jesus says that one of the things He wants people in the world to know is this, that Lord, I pray that the world may know the last part of verse 23, that Thou didst send me, in the second part, and love them even as Thou didst love me.

That means I saw from that verse, I mean, I knew there were many verses that told me that God loved me, but there was only one verse in the whole Bible that told me how much He loved me. There may be another place, but this is the only one I discovered. How much did He love me? He loved me as much as He loved Jesus.

Now that is almost unbelievable to accept, but it's true. As much as He loved Jesus, He loved me. As much as He cared for Jesus, He'd care for me.

There was, I can imagine that the Father in heaven watched when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. And when Herod sent his soldiers to kill Him, the Father planned for that and took Him away. And when other people tried to harm Him, the Father watched over Jesus' life.

Once when He was 30 years old, they all ganged up on Him in the synagogue. They got upset with His message, pulled Him to the top of a cliff to throw Him down, and the Father watched over it, got all those men having some argument with each other, and by the time Jesus could walk away and escape. That's how the Father watched over Jesus.

And Jesus and I discovered that the Father loved me as He loved Jesus. He cared for me. You know, we live in an insecure world and we are uncertain whether people love us.

We live in uncertainty. One of the greatest needs, the only thing that can ever deliver us and assure us in this insecure world is the fact that God loves us as He loved Jesus. And I want to tell you something.

God's love for you does not depend on your performance. No. He loves you because you are His child, not because you perform well, not because you have reached a certain standard.

Do you think a mother doesn't love her child because that child got one finger missing or two fingers missing in her hand? No. It loves that, the mother loves that child. Do you think a mother doesn't love a child because the child is deformed or not intelligent or retarded? I think sometimes that mother loves that child more.

Does it depend on performance? Going to some home, going to some home where there is some retarded child and look and observe and learn how the mother cares for that child. Does she put less food in front of him at the dining table? Does she love that child less? No. It doesn't matter if you are retarded.

God loves you still. It doesn't matter if you are not gifted like somebody else. God's love for you is dependent on one fact that you chose Jesus.

Sometime in your life, you chose His son and you come in the name of His son and He has accepted you. Don't think that you are waiting for Him. He is waiting for you.

He is waiting for you. So many of us, we think, oh, we got to somehow convince God to give us this and give us that. No.

You know, one of the best ways I can illustrate a Christian being born again is like the Bible calls it a marriage. The Bible says we are married to Christ. That's what it means to be born again.

And we can understand marriage. God uses simple pictures. Romans 7 verse 4 says we are married to Christ.

That's a beautiful picture because we can all understand it. And can you picture a marriage now? I want to picture a marriage before you right now. Here is Jesus and God is conducting this marriage and you are standing there next to Jesus.

And God says to Jesus, will you take this woman to be your wife? And Jesus says, yes. Even though you are ugly, filthy, whatever it is, He says, yes. And then God asks you, will you accept this man to be your husband? And you scratch your head.

Say, I got to think about it. Have you ever seen a marriage like that? And Jesus is waiting. One hour.

You are still thinking. See, that's the situation of a lot of people today. Jesus said, yes, long ago.

And here are people waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting. Who is waiting? God is waiting for you. You think you are waiting for God? He is waiting for you to say yes.

To surrender to Him. To be united with Him. So that your life can be changed.

God is a loving Father. He cares for us as He cared for Jesus. He will do everything for you that He did for Jesus.

Why do I say that? The Bible says in Romans chapter 8 and verse 29. You know, there is only one way that you can have faith. I hope you know that.

Only one way by which you can have faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. You can never, never have faith if you don't know the Scriptures.

If you don't listen to the Scriptures. I'll tell you a habit that I developed years ago, which has helped me. First of all, let me use an illustration.

Whenever I read a book, and I read a word in the English language, which I don't understand, some tough word in that book, I say, Hey, I haven't come across that word before. I'd like to know what it means. Now, some people, when they come across a difficult word, they're too lazy to look up a dictionary.

And those are the people whose English never improves, because they're too lazy to look up a dictionary. Now, I always told my children, whenever you read anything, you come across a word you don't understand, put that book down, take up a dictionary, and try to understand what it means. Improve your English.

Okay. Now, that's not so important, even if your English doesn't improve. Now I'm coming to the application.

Whenever you hear a verse being quoted in an article, in a magazine, in a book, in a message, and you don't know what that verse means, or what that verse says, stop. Pick up your Bible. Turn to it.

That is what I have done for 42 years. And that's how I got to know this book. Every single time somebody quoted a verse in a meeting, and I say, hey, I don't know that verse.

I turn to that verse. I read a book, and I find a verse quoted there in brackets. I say, what's that verse? I haven't heard that one before.

And I turn to it. Get into that habit from today. Faith will come.

Some of you are not serious about studying the scriptures, and waiting for faith, faith, faith. You won't get faith in a hundred years, because God sees you're lazy. What does Romans 8.29 say? Do you know it? No wonder you're so insecure, if you don't know it.

Because it says in Romans 8.29, He foreknew us. He knew us before He created the world. And there, when He foreknew us, He predestined us.

That means He determined the destiny for me. He had a plan for me. My father had a plan for my life.

And what was that plan? That plan was, that I, wretched man that I am, should become like Jesus. That's His plan for you. And God made that plan for you, before the world was created, that you should become like Jesus Christ.

And that you should also be the first, that you should be one of the younger brothers of Jesus, so that He can be the firstborn among many brothers. Have you read that expression there? Read Romans 8.29, that He should be the first among many brothers. Do you know that the Bible says, that God so loved the world, that He gave His, what? Only begotten Son.

But do you know that Jesus is not called the only begotten Son today? Throughout the New Testament, after the resurrection of Jesus, He is never called the only begotten Son. He is called the firstborn Son. Why? Because He's got some younger brothers and sisters now.

What's the difference between only begotten and firstborn? I've got four sons, I'll tell you. Thirty years ago, I had only one son. And I would say, this is my only begotten son.

Today, it would be wrong for me to call him the only begotten son. I would say, he's my firstborn son. Do you understand the difference? Because I've got three others after.

Years ago, God said, this is my only begotten son. Now He says, this is my firstborn son, because He's got thousands of brothers and sisters. And you're one of them.

Okay, now I come to the application. Listen to this. I made a decision in my life, that I would try my best to represent God to my children, as a father.

That's what a father is supposed to do. That when my children look at me, they should see something of what God is like. And I realized that one of the main characteristics of God is, one of His characteristics anyway, is that He is not partial.

You know that. There's no partiality with God, the Bible says, in more than one place. And so I decided, that everything I did for my first son, I would do for my second son, third son, fourth son.

Everything. I would show no partiality. If I got something for my first son, I would get it for my second, I'd get it for my third, I'd get it for my fourth.

So that none of my children could ever say to me, that I was partial to my eldest son, or to any son. They were all equal to me. Because that's how God is.

No partiality. So nobody could ever say, Dad, you did that for my elder brother, you never did that for me. They could not, till today not one of them can say that.

And I realized that God is a much better, I'm sure you all agree, that God's a better father than me. Is there any partiality with God? Tell me yes or no. No.

Okay, now answer my question. If there's no partiality with God, will He do for the younger brothers of Jesus, everything that He did for His firstborn son, yes or no? Yes. Shame the devil and say yes.

Yes, of course. Okay, now apply to yourself. Will the Father do for you, what He did for Jesus? Yes or no? Why are you hesitant? Say yes.

Of course He'll do for you what He did for Jesus. Because you're a son, you're a daughter, and there's no partiality with God. It's got nothing to do with you.

You may be retarded, you may be stupid, you may be good for nothing, but you're a younger brother of Jesus. You're a younger sister of Jesus. And what God did for Jesus, He'll do for you.

Do you know what a wonderful thing it is to be a younger brother of Jesus? That's why I tell people everywhere, please call me brother. Don't call me Reverend, Right Reverend, Zach, Pastor, and all these types of wretched, low-down titles. Call me a brother.

Who wants all these low-down titles like Reverend and Right Reverend? A pastor. I'm a brother. Younger brother of Jesus.

Try and find a better title than that. There's none in the whole world. A younger sister of Jesus Christ.

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