

The Call of God - to Know God

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of knowing God personally and intimately, rather than merely understanding doctrine or scripture.

Duration: 56:50

Scripture: Matthew 7:21

Topics: "Knowing God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses two groups of people who approach God. The first group boasts about their accomplishments in prophesying, performing miracles, and casting out demons in God's name. However, despite their impressive deeds, God tells them that He never knew them. The second group is characterized by their acts of kindness, such as giving water to drink, providing a home, and visiting those in prison. These individuals are welcomed into the joy of the Lord. The speaker emphasizes that our relationship with God should be based on love, not legalism, and that God desires a personal encounter with His children.

Transcript

I have been burdened about for our own churches in India that God has raised up over the last twenty or more years is that each one in our churches will know God more personally, intimately and better. I find there is a lot of difference between knowing the Bible and knowing God, between knowing doctrine and knowing Jesus himself. And many people think that if they can get a little more teaching or find some secret of how to live a victorious life, something which they feel they have missed, they go from meeting to meeting to meeting, looking for that elusive thing which they never seem to be able to get.

You will never find it. The answer is in the person of Jesus Christ. It is in God.

It is not in a doctrine, it is not in an experience, it is not even in some so-called deeper life teaching. It is in Jesus himself. And that is why the Bible says, there is a verse in Daniel 11 which says, the people who know their God will be strong and do exploits.

And Jesus said in John 17 and verse 3, he said, this is eternal life. Now, you and I were asked to give a definition of eternal life. I wonder whether we would give this what Jesus gave.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should have everlasting life. Now, how do you define that everlasting life? Is it just living forever? That is how many think of it. It means going to heaven when I die.

But Jesus hardly ever spoke about going to heaven when you die. That which so many preachers speak about today, which has become the goal of so many Christians, to go to heaven when I die. Interestingly enough, Jesus never spoke about it.

You read the Gospels and see. And when we don't see what Jesus spoke about and listen more to what today's preachers speak, you are going to find the result in our life is going to be shallow. When our faith rests more on what we read in Christian magazines than in the word of God, we are going to have problems.

And those problems we have created for ourselves. So Jesus defined eternal life like this. This is eternal life.

That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. How did we first come to the Lord? It was not through a doctrine or a message primarily. We encountered Jesus.

I knew from childhood that Christ died for the sins of the world, died for my sins. I knew I was a sinner. I remember when I encountered Jesus at the age of 19.

There was nothing new I learned that day which I didn't know from childhood. But I met Jesus face to face. That's how I was saved.

I knew he was my savior, that he loved me and died for my sins. And as I went on in my Christian life and I found after a while defeat, unreality, I sought the answer in a doctrine. I read books on holiness, went to meetings on the deeper life and on holiness.

And I was disappointed. And then God gave me a new revelation of himself. I find that God leads us higher and higher in the Christian life by giving us fresh revelations of himself.

That is eternal life. We are to enjoy it more and more. Paul says, what does that mean? Timothy was a Christian for many years.

He was a servant of the Lord. He was the most faithful of Paul's servants. Paul said that there was no one like Timothy who sought Christ and not his own.

And yet to such a person who had been walking with the Lord for so many years, serving sacrificially, Paul says, lay hold of eternal life. You need to know God better. The answer to many of your problems, Timothy, is in knowing God.

Because eternal life is to know God and to know Jesus Christ better. And all the insecurity that I found in so many Christians is basically because they don't know God. Most Christians are living a life where they're trying to give an impression, they're happy, everything's going well.

And there are deep burdens and sorrows and unanswered questions inside. There are problems and questions they face which they're almost ashamed to share with people because Christians are not supposed to have such problems. And everybody's pretending we don't have any problems, we don't have any questions.

And this man said, well, if I lose it, I don't know what my Master will say. So I better just keep it. Because he had the wrong understanding of his Master.

That's why he buried. And I feel a lot of Christians are like that. When we have a wrong understanding of God, the use we can make of our life is wasted.

We just bury it and waste it. We're not willing to throw away our life for Jesus Christ. Because we don't know God.

And it was like that with me. Till I saw Jesus who explained God as a Father. He came and he rent the veil.

And he took us inside to show us that God is kind and loving. He's not demanding. He's not there waiting to catch you if you made a mistake.

And he's not one who's made a lot of rules and regulations that we have to keep in order to be holy. And I discovered that the foundation of holiness is to know God as a God of love. And that the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the being filled with the Holy Spirit, was to me what's written in Romans chapter 5 and verse 5. It says that the love of God has been poured out through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

That's two things. That the Holy Spirit fills my heart with a revelation of God's eternal, perfect love for me. Because another thing I used to think about God was that God would always demand something hard and difficult.

If there were two jobs open for me and one offered a lower salary than the other one, God would definitely want me to take the lower one. And if there were two girls whom you're considering marriage and one was uglier, that was definitely the one whom God wanted you to marry. You know the number of Christians who've got these concepts.

God's always wanting to make life miserable for you. And He doesn't want you to go out and enjoy a game of playing some baseball or whatever you play here. In India we play cricket and soccer.

He doesn't want that. He always wants you to be fasting and praying and reading the Bible and there are enough preachers to whip us up and say, why can't you spend more time reading this and you're out there playing games. And I had this idea.

It was all rules and regulations. My life was, I mean, I was trying. I think a lot of such people are very sincere and they're sincere and miserable too at the same time.

And they're trying to serve God. I don't question their sincerity one bit. What I want to tell them is, brother, Jesus has come.

We're not under law now. He has come to set us free. And there are many things that God began to show me through the scriptures.

He didn't make me unholy. It showed me what real holiness was. You see, for example, I don't think the Pharisees would ever crack a joke or have any sense of humor.

And if you think that God is a God who's very serious and stern all the time because their sinner is going to hell and so many problems in the world, you're going to be like that. And your life is going to be miserable and you're going to make everybody else's life miserable around you, particularly in your home. But I discovered that humor was a gift of God.

I saw it because God was a God of love. And humor was such a good thing, provided it's not dirty, provided it's not there to hurt anyone else. I saw it was a gift of God given to us to release us from tensions and pressures in a difficult world.

I'm just taking one example. It's not a very big thing. But I saw that as one thing, which if I saw God didn't have it, then I don't want it in my life.

But when I saw that God had it, it liberated me. I could be happy. And through the years, I've discovered that the test of our relationship with anyone is whether you can exercise humor with that person, whether you can crack a joke and pull his leg or say something funny.

If you don't believe me, you test this out. When you have tension with your wife, I believe you can still pray together. You can't because that's a religious exercise.

But you won't be able to crack a joke at each other. Even if you do, the other person won't laugh. And you know, when the other person doesn't laugh, you know there's tension.

It's true. I discovered it. And it's with a brother too.

You can pray with a brother with whom you have problems, but you can never crack a joke and laugh together. And so those just sound so unspiritual because you've got a wrong concept of God. I discovered that the test of a relationship is not that we can pray together, but that we can laugh together and crack jokes together.

Now, I'm trying to break down all these concepts of spirituality that we have. What we have is religiosity. I'm not saying we shouldn't pray together, but I believe when we are in fellowship with each other, we can pray together better and be more united and accomplish more than just go through a ritual.

A husband and wife who can laugh and have fun together, when they pray together, even for two minutes, God hears. But if there's tension and strain and they can't laugh together and they pray even for half an hour, nothing happens. It's like throwing a ball against the wall.

It just comes back. We can have a satisfaction, I prayed for half an hour. What happened? That's how it is.

And if we raise our children in that type of atmosphere, they're going to have the same type of religiosity in that generation. Now, let me get to something in scripture to show you this. You know, I have thought that why did Jesus, when he, you know that Jesus' life was totally planned by the Father, right from beginning to end, every little detail.

It says when he was born in Bethlehem, that was to fulfill, Matthew says, because it was written in the scriptures that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem. There's a prophecy like that in Micah chapter 5. And then when he was in Nazareth, it says in the end of Matthew chapter 2, that there was some verse in the Old Testament which says that he should be a Nazarene. I looked for that verse in the Old Testament, I couldn't find it.

He was to be a Nazarene, that he was to live in Nazareth, that that was to fulfill a scripture. And then I discovered that it had to do with some Hebrew word which sounded like Nazareth in Isaiah chapter 11. That was what God was talking about.

Even there, it was hidden there, in that word. He was to be Nazareth. And even when he was hanging on the cross, and he said a simple word like I thirst, you read in John 19, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Right down to the last thing, his bones were not broken so that the scripture might be fulfilled, that not one bone of his shall be broken. His whole life was planned. He could not be born anywhere.

He could not be crucified anywhere. He had to be crucified on the Passover day. Every little detail of his life was planned.

I believe God's love plans for us like that too. It's been a tremendous comfort for me to know that, that my life is not sort of accidental. I'm not just some number in God's computer.

I'm a person. I'm a child whom he knows personally. He knew me before the worlds were created.

My name was in his mind from all eternity. Nothing that happens in my life is an accident. Everything is planned carefully to lead me to the highest possible life I can ever accomplish.

It won't be like another person's, naturally. God doesn't put us all in one classroom and give us the same lectures. He gives us private tuition.

Each one of us personally, you know like these big kings and queens, their children don't go to school. They get private tuition from tutors. That's what we are.

And that's what the Holy Spirit does. And that's why I never question why God deals with somebody else in some other way. No.

But I say this in Jesus' life, that God planned the very first miracle that he was going to do. And the very first, this was going to be the demonstration of the most miraculous ministry in any man has ever accomplished on this earth. And this was going to introduce a new era in God's dealings with man.

It was the beginning of the new covenant. And what miracle does he do? To make more wine at a wedding. Have you ever heard of a more unspiritual miracle than that? To make more wine at a wedding.

I mean, if God had given me the job of planning the miracle ministry of Jesus, I'd have put the resurrection of Lazarus or something like that right at the beginning. Instead of something so, I mean, at least feeding of the 5,000, they're hungry. But to give more wine to fellows who are already drunk, to me that's the most unspiritual of all Jesus' miracles to my human understanding.

It says, it's not that they didn't, they planned for the wedding and they ran short. And it's obvious this was either a second or a third round. It was not that there wasn't enough for everybody, because people had, could compare it with what they had earlier.

So they already had beer. And they said, well, this tastes better than what we had before. And there I see something of the nature of Jesus.

When his mother came to him and said, they have no wine. What should a spiritual man or a religious man say? Well, that must be the will of God. So let's fast and pray now, because we're not supposed to drink anymore.

God has ordained that the wine is over. Let's turn this wedding into a fasting and prayer meeting. Jesus didn't do that.

We think that these religious activities are the thing that will make us more spiritual. I see something wonderful in the heart of Jesus. The very first miracle he ever did, he said, fine.

And he was prompted by the Father. Remember, he's explaining the Father. This is what God is like.

He's not out to spoil. He's out to make things better. He's out to make us happy.

And he made more wine. And I calculated this. It says here, there were six water pots containing twenty or thirty gallons each, twenty-five gallons each, a hundred and fifty gallons of wine.

Now, would you ever do such a thing? No, we're so holy, we wouldn't do such a thing. It says that in John 2, 6. And you know, the marriage was in a house, it says. And they were invited to a wedding.

And I don't know how many people, let's say at the most, about three hundred people. Three hundred people and a hundred and fifty gallons of wine. Each man was going to drink a half a gallon of wine.

It's amazing. This is a different Jesus from the one that's normally portrayed. And remember, this is the first miracle.

He's introducing this new covenant. Now, I'm not trying to make all of you wine drinkers. That's not my aim in this message.

I'm just trying to say that Jesus is not that hard, strict, religious type of person that the devil has portrayed before you for so many years. I'm going to get rid of that image, that's all. You know, that was a problem in those days.

The devil had portrayed a God before the people in the synagogue as a very strict, demanding policeman or something like that. And there was no fun, there was no joy in his life. And Jesus came and he demolished it.

And also, he did things to demolish that idea of religion, which came out of rituals and activities. He wanted people to be happy. And a happiness that came through true holiness, not through rituals.

And I believe that he did that first miracle to demolish this religion of taste not, handle not. You know, this religion that had brought bondage to the Israelites for so many years and the that, all together, and to make us free. But even after so many years, so many believers are not free.

Jesus said, if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I've heard that when Abraham Lincoln pronounced the proclamation of liberty for the slaves here, there wasn't television and radio those days for the news to go around so fast. But I've heard there were so many people who were slaves who never knew about it, that they were actually free.

Because their masters made sure that the slaves would never hear about it. And it went on not for one or two years, for many, many years. So many people never knew that they could be free.

And I thought of that in relation to so many Christians. There's a proclamation of liberty, proclaimed on the day Jesus rose from the dead. But so many haven't understood it.

They're back under the religion of the Jews, unhappy, miserable, long-faced. Instead of walking with a spring in their step, twinkle in their eye, song in their heart, the joy of the Lord bubbling over from them. It's not there.

Something is wrong. And the devil has told us, well, if you go into all that, you'll sin. Well, I haven't found that.

I found I sinned more when I was miserable. Because the Bible says a merry heart does good like a medicine. It even heals us from sicknesses, and certainly from spiritual sicknesses.

You know, one of the big differences between Old Testament righteousness and New Testament righteousness is this. There was righteousness in the Old Testament, sure. There are many, you look up at concordance, righteousness is found all over the Old Testament.

But that's not the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. The righteousness of the Kingdom of God is found in Romans 14, 17, where it says, the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If I have a righteousness which does not have joy in the Holy Spirit, it's not the Kingdom of God.

It's not New Covenant righteousness. That's what I decided for myself. A long-faced, serious righteousness without any joy, which makes me miserable and makes other people miserable around me.

It may be righteousness, but not the righteousness Jesus came to give. It's not. It's not the righteousness that the Holy Spirit has come to give.

The righteousness of the Kingdom of God is, this is the way I can test it. Here's the righteousness which this brother has, and here's the righteousness this brother has. I want to say, who's got joy in the Holy Spirit? They both may be equally righteous.

But if one's got joy in the Holy Spirit, I say, that's the righteousness of the law, and this is the righteousness of God. And Paul, who lived for so many years seeking the righteousness of the law, says in Philippians chapter 3, verse 9, he says, I don't want to be found with that righteousness which is from the law, but that which is from faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God. What's the difference? How do I know? How do I know when this brother lives a holy life and this brother lives a holy life, who is in the Old Covenant and who is in the New Covenant? I find for myself.

I don't want to judge them. Let me ask myself. How do I know whether the righteousness I've got is of the Old Covenant or the New Covenant? Do you know that in the Old Covenant also they had righteousness? Sure.

Do you think John the Baptist or Elijah were ungodly people? Do you think they were running after money or running after women or seeking honor from people or any such thing? No. You wouldn't be, you wouldn't find such people with today's television evangelists and that type of crowd. They are altogether

different.

They were Old Testament people with such righteousness. How do I know whether the righteousness I have today is the righteousness of Elijah and John the Baptist or is it the righteousness of Jesus? For myself, I find it in Romans 14, 17. Is it coupled with joy in the Holy Spirit? Is there peace or is it tense in my heart all the time? Is there joy? Has it liberated me? Has it made me happy? Then I know it's from God.

This is the righteousness of God. There's a lot of righteousness today my brothers and sisters among Christians. I believe in righteousness.

I believe in victory over sin. I believe in victory over anger. I fought anger in my life.

I said, Lord, I want to live a life where 365 days of the year I'll never lose my temper at my wife even once. I'll never raise my voice. Sin shall not have dominion over me.

I believe this. I believe in righteousness. When the Bible says in Ephesians 4, 32, put away all anger.

I believe it my 100 percent, but not by gritting my teeth and saying, I'm going to make it. No, you can't do it like that. You know, in India we have a part of Hinduism teaches a thing called yoga.

Yoga is the type of self-control where even if it's boiling inside, you don't let anything come out of your mouth. To speak a word, you put the screw on tight on the bottle. And we can't manage it because we don't do yoga, but the many Hindus who manage it.

I remember a brother who came to our church and said he got victory over anger before he came to the church because he practiced yoga. Buddha was a great religious leader in India many hundreds of years before Christ. And he forsook all the greatness of this world and went and sat in a forest for enlightenment.

You know, the soul controlling its passions. It doesn't solve the problem inside because it's boiling like anything inside. But it teaches you to put the screw on tight so that nothing comes out.

And somebody came and irritated Buddha once and he said, well, you come 10 years too late. You can't irritate me now. You know, there's a victory like that.

It's a counterfeit. It looks as though we're holy, we're controlled, but there's no joy in our heart. There's no freedom.

It's the righteousness of the law. Now it's good because at least you don't yell at people and make them miserable. But all I say is don't mistake that for the righteousness of the kingdom of God.

It's because of our concept of God. We think, we don't know God is a God of love. For example, this version is a wonderful version, Zephaniah chapter 3, which says, Zephaniah is the fourth or fifth book from the end of the Old Testament.

Chapter 3 and verse 17. It says here, the Lord your God is in your midst a victorious warrior, which means he's defeated Satan. He's defeated your enemies, a victorious warrior.

And now he will, you've got to really read this to believe it. He will exalt, exalt is a word which is far greater than rejoice, exalt over you with joy. I want to ask you honestly, my dear brothers and sisters, how many of you believe really that when God looks at you, he just exalts with joy.

We can't believe that. It's not going to be me. It must be somebody else.

You're exalting with joy over me. Well, I've got so many sins in me. I've got so many weaknesses.

I have failed you so many times. I've tried to serve you. You must be always frowning at me and saying you can do better.

You know, we feel, we know a God who's always saying to us, it's not good enough. You can do better. I'll tell you this to fathers.

You try that on your son. Whatever he does, you say, not good enough. However much he tries to please you, say not good enough, you can do better.

You'll make him a nervous wreck. And we think God is like that. Not good enough.

You can do better. It's a lie. It's a lie that's been foisted on Christendom by the devil for so many years.

And I tell you, you don't become better. I discovered that the way to perfection was to know God as a God who loved me perfectly. In whose love I found myself secure.

And in that love, I grew in holiness. I got victory over my anger. I got control over my tongue.

It's not true what the devil says, that when you are secure in God's love, you'll sin and take advantage of Him. Not at all. It's not true.

When the prodigal son came back to his father's house, and he saw the tremendous love that the father had for him. How he didn't put him in the servant's quarters for six months to test him out, to see whether he had really repented. You know, all that he said was, I've sinned.

He didn't even complete the big lecture he had to give to his father about all the various things. He said, I want to hear it. You know, the father just said, that's fine.

Forget it. I don't want to hear what you did. I'm so delighted that you come back.

And I know you wasted 50% of my earnings, which I gave you. You lost it all. It's okay.

It doesn't matter. You've come back. And you're precious to me.

And I don't have to test you out. I take you at your word. Do you believe God takes you at your word? And you say, Lord, I'm sorry.

I really want to please you. I really want to do your will. I haven't done it right.

He doesn't put you in under probation for six months. Just takes you right as you are. And says, come and sit at my right hand.

And it says, he put a ring on his finger. He took the ring off from his own hand and put it on his finger. And I thought of this.

I said, why didn't the father give that ring to his older son for all these years? His older son was so obedient, keeping everything, all the commandments and doing everything right. And he never gave that ring to his older son. He gave it to his younger one.

I think Jesus was trying to highlight the difference between being a religious person and a sinner who's forgiven and who's come into acceptance with the Lord. That spirit of that older son was not right. Even though he did everything according to the father's commandment.

He said to the father, I've kept all your commandments. And that's how the Pharisees were. There was something wrong in their spirit.

And God couldn't fellowship with them. And I find it very difficult to fellowship with a person who doesn't have the joy of the Lord. He may be very righteous, but his righteousness makes me uncomfortable.

And that's why sinners felt uncomfortable in the presence of the Pharisees. Whereas Jesus was more righteous. How is it that the sinners felt comfortable with him? I believe that's how it must be in our churches.

If a sinner comes to our church and feels uncomfortable, then he really wants to follow the Lord. I mean, if he's a rebellious sinner who wants to live in sin, naturally he'd feel uncomfortable. But if he's one who wants to give up his sin, he's having these inner struggles, and he comes here and he says, well, these are a holy bunch of people.

They won't understand my problems. And he walks away. I want to say we have failed as a church.

Jesus is not in our midst. The presence of Jesus makes those who want to give up their sin welcome, even if they're still defeated. Even if they're still defeated.

The Lord's not in a hurry. He can wait. He draws to himself those who are sincere, even if they're defeated.

There's a verse in the Old Testament which says in Isaiah and 64 and verse 5. It's an amazing verse. It says, Lord, you meet those. You know, this is an interesting verse, because this is one whom the Lord wants to meet.

It says, you meet those, you meet with those who rejoice in doing righteousness. Not who do righteousness, but who rejoice in doing righteousness. Those are the ones whom the Lord meets with.

And if I want to meet with the Lord every day, I have to be one who has joy along with my righteousness. And I'll show you another verse in the book of Deuteronomy in this connection. In chapter 28, the Lord says, it's an amazing verse.

Deuteronomy 28 and verse 47. It doesn't say you didn't serve the Lord. That's what I want you to notice here.

It does not say you did not serve the Lord. You did serve the Lord. But you did not serve the Lord with joy and with a glad heart for the abundance of all things.

For all that God did for you. You couldn't respond with joy. Therefore, you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord shall send against you.

Is that true? Is joy such an important thing for the Lord? It certainly is. I want to show you a New Testament verse. 2 Corinthians chapter 9, it says, God, in the last part of verse 7, 2 Corinthians 9, 7, God loves a cheerful giver.

See, that's the difference between tithing and New Testament giving. Whatever it is. Whether it's giving our life or our money or our time or anything to God.

In the Old Testament, it was law. Work out 10% of what you brought in from your barns. Weigh it out exactly and give it to God.

The Pharisees were very exact about it. They didn't necessarily give it joyfully. And there was no command in the Old Testament, you must tithe joyfully.

You must tithe. So these fellows, they weighed it out. They were not at all happy.

And they said, okay, God, here's your portion. Take it. Let me enjoy the rest of it myself.

That's not what God wanted. It was a temporary provision to try and teach people to God's ways. But that wasn't what God wanted.

What God really wanted, we read in the New Testament. He loves a cheerful giver. He wants us to be happy in what we give.

Have you heard the story of that little girl who went to Sunday school and the mother gave her 25 cents to put in the offering box and 10 cents to buy a sweet on the way home. And when she came home, the mother asked her, well, did you put the 25 cents in? She said, no, I put the 10 cents in. So why? She said, I was going to put the 25 cents in when the Sunday school teacher said, God loves a cheerful giver.

So I felt I could give the 10 cents more cheerfully than the 25 cents. I put the 10 cents and spent the 25 cents on myself. You know, she was absolutely right.

You think God wanted her to reluctantly give that 25 cents? God wanted a happy girl going home. That's that's our God. He loves us.

And I'm saying when that prodigal son came back, do you think when he saw the goodness of the father's heart, he would have taken advantage of that? I can't believe it. He would have been so broken when he saw how much his father loved him that he would have never taken advantage of his father. He may have slipped up and made mistakes like we all do, but I can't imagine that he'd ever have taken advantage of his father again.

That consciousness of how he had messed up his life and ruined all that the father gave him, how the father forgave him so freely would always be in the back of his mind, say, well, I never want to take advantage of my dad again. And so when we seek God's love, it's not going to make us take advantage of him. No, it's going to make us more dedicated.

It's not going to make us give the 10 cents. It's going to make us give everything we have joyfully, gladly, because our relationship with the Lord now is not a legalistic one where I have to keep certain rules. And no, it's one of love.

That's what God has always wanted. He could never accomplish it with the law. There's a phrase in Romans 8, 3, which says what the law could not do.

What was it the law could not do? There are many things the law could not do, but let me tell you one thing. It could not make a man give his money joyfully to God. It could make a man give his money, sure.

The threats, even the last page of the Old Testament says, if you don't bring the tithes into the storehouse, you are cursed with a curse. And there are enough preachers preaching that today, but they need to turn one more page and come into the New Testament. I said, they haven't got a New Testament in their Bible.

And there are poor people sitting there listening to all that, thinking that's Revelation chapter 22. That's not Revelation 22. That's Malachi chapter 3. That's how it was in the Old Testament.

And they got scared. I don't want to curse. Okay, 10% to be on the safe side.

I'll put a few extra coins in just to make sure I haven't come short. Is this the way a man is supposed to live with the Heavenly Father? That wasn't the way. That's the way the elder son lived with his father, but not the prodigal.

He said, Dad, I don't want any salary for my work. I don't want any kid to celebrate with my friends. You've already done so much for me.

I don't want anything. My whole life is yours. I want to live for you.

And I will never say that I have repaid you enough for what you've done for me. And all this time, he wouldn't be working fixed hours like the elder son because he's been forgiven so much. You remember what Jesus told the Pharisee, you're worried about this woman washing my feet, being a sinful woman.

Do you know in God's eyes, she's way ahead of you. Even though she doesn't fast, she doesn't pray like you do. She doesn't know the Bible, one percent of what you know, but she loves much.

Why? Because she's been forgiven much. Whoever has been forgiven much, loves much. That's why the younger son could love.

The older son couldn't. He felt, well, I haven't done so many wrong things. Naturally, he wouldn't love the father so much.

It would be a nine to five type of work that he did for his father, but not a younger one. He was always conscious how much he'd been forgiven. Are you conscious how much you've been forgiven or do you forget that? Peter says in 2nd Peter chapter 1, he says, those who forget their former purification from their sins are short-sighted.

You know, we have, our human nature is like that. We can faithfully recollect all the evil things people did to us, sometimes even with exact dates as to when people did it. It's like that in husband and wife too sometimes.

You heard of that couple who went for marriage counseling and the man said, well, you know, when my wife, when we have a fight, my wife becomes historical. He said, what do you mean historical? I said, hysterical. He said, no, she's historical.

She brings out all the old history from many, many years. So we are historical when we get into problems with other people. And it's pretty accurate history we've got with dates and everything else.

You know, when we study history in school, one of the things was dates, on what date was this war and this battle and things like that. And it's like that with us, human nature is like that. We remember very accurately all the evil that people have done to us.

We forget the good. But what we do remember is the good that we have done to other people, that also sometimes with dates. But we forget the evil that we have done to others.

And this is how it is in our relationship with God too. We forget all the good he's done. We forget all the evil we have done.

And we remember all the good we have done. You remember those two groups with Jesus spoke, who stand as his judgment seat in the final day. I look at it like this.

One group says, Lord, shall I tell you what all I did for you? I prophesied in your name. I did miracles in your name. I cast out demons in your name.

And we could add to that list. There's just three at the top. I did this, I did this, I did this.

Lord says, I never knew you. And then there's another group whom the Lord says, do you remember you gave me water to drink once? When was that Lord? I don't remember. Do you remember you gave me a house to live in, clothes to wear when I was naked? I was in prison once and you came to visit me.

I said, Lord, when was that? They don't remember. Enter into the joy of the Lord. These are two different categories.

What do you remember? All the little sacrifices you've made for the Lord. Then we haven't seen Calvary. When we see Calvary, we can never think that we've ever done anything to the Lord.

I know in my own life, as I saw more and more of the real meaning of Calvary and what Jesus, the extent to which he went to love me, to show his love for me, the agony he went through in Gethsemane, that cup. I believe that cup was, it wasn't physical death. Jesus was never scared of physical death.

There are martyrs who've gone singing hymns to the stake. How could Jesus be afraid of physical death? Far from it. That was only one thing Jesus wanted to avoid in Gethsemane.

That fellowship with the Father, which he had for eternal ages, was going to be broken for three hours. He said, is there another way? I'm not worried about the physical death and shame and hanging in an underwear in front of everyone up on the cross and mocked, despised. I do that a million times.

But this fellowship, Father, which you and I have had for eternal ages, do we really have to break it? Father said, yes, if you want to save these people. If you don't want to, you can just come straight up from Gethsemane up to heaven. And he loved you and me enough to say, okay.

When you see that, I don't think we'll ever understand on this earth what it cost him. Because I don't understand the value of fellowship with God as much. But I'll know in eternity.

And it won't be the wounds in his hand as much as the fact that he allowed that fellowship to be broken. And in the light of that, for me to think that I made some sacrifice for the Lord, I got to be crazy. What sacrifice have I made in 40 years as a Christian? Zero.

You know, when you see your sacrifices, when you're not in the light of Calvary, not in the light of God, it's like the stars. When you see the stars, are there stars in the sky right now? Yes. You can't see them, but they're there.

When do you see them? When it becomes night. When do you see your little sacrifices? When you're in the darkness. You come into the light of God in Calvary and say, Lord, I can't think of any sacrifice I made.

Not even one. Whoever is forgiven much loves much. I just want to say, brothers and sisters, God is a good God.

He's always on our side against the devil. He wants us to be happy in our Christianity. If you don't want to give, don't give.

If you don't want to give your life, don't give. He doesn't want to force anyone. He loves a cheerful giver.

Whatever we do, we do righteousness. He meets those who rejoice in doing righteousness. And you'll discover in the long run that if you throw away everything for Jesus' sake in the Gospels, you'll get a hundred times back.

I've discovered that. I want to invite you to another level of Christianity, on a higher plane, real holiness, which is a joy, full of joy of the Holy Spirit and peace. Let's pray.

What are all the empty pleasures of the world and pleasures of sin compared to fellowship with God, to serve such a wonderful God, to live for Him, to give everything to Him, to please Him? Don't let the devil blind your eyes, any of you. There's nothing greater than giving everything totally, happily, joyfully to this God, our Father. Ask God, ask the Holy Spirit to show you the true nature of God, one who exalts over you with joy, one who is disappointed when you have a wrong understanding of Him, when you're afraid to surrender everything to Him because you think He will mess up your life or make you miserable.

What an insult! We need to repent. Repent that we ever allowed such thoughts to come into our mind. Surrender everything to Him and say, Lord, here is the proof that I believe You're a God of perfect love.

If I give everything into Your hands, You will make the best use of it. You'll make my life the happiest life that I could ever live on the face of the earth. There are others who have found it.

I want to find it too. Lead me into such a life. Heavenly Father, help us, we pray, each one, not to live on the low plane that so many Christians are living around us, not even to be holy with religious rules and regulations, but to enter into that real holiness that comes by seeing You, by Your Holy Spirit flooding our hearts with Your love.

Help us, each one, we pray. Make our lives different, that when we finish with this week and go away, our lives are going to be totally changed. We want it to be like that, we ask in Jesus' name.

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