

First Step to Partake of God's Nature (Kannada)

by Zac Poonen

The greatest gift heaven can give is God's own nature, and it is essential for living a godly life and being a true follower of Christ.

Duration: 55:53

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 4:10

Topics: "Repentance", "Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of honoring God in our lives to receive His honor in return. It contrasts worldly values with heavenly values, highlighting the need for repentance and sensitivity to our conscience. The speaker challenges listeners to prioritize their conscience above all else, seeking to live a life that reflects God's nature and to be quick to repent of any wrongdoing.

Transcript

One Samuel, chapter 2, verse 30. Chapter 2, verse 30. The last part of that verse, the Lord says, those who honor me, I will honor.

Those who despise me will be lightly esteemed. First of all, we want to know, how does God honor people? If we don't understand that, it is very easy to be deceived. In the world, they have the idea that God honors people by giving them a lot of money.

The sad thing is that most Christians also believe that. They make a lot of money. And the other thing that worldly people think is that God honors people by giving them some high position in life, like MP or cabinet minister or something like that.

Then again, we have to say that the apostles never got any honor in that case. In 1 Corinthians, we read in chapter 4, and verse 10. The Corinthians were a carnal group of believers.

Whereas, Paul was a spiritual man. And to this worldly group of Christians, he says, in verse 10, last part, we read the whole verse. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise.

We are weak, but you are strong. You are distinguished. We are without honor.

Now, when you look at that verse, what are the values that the world appreciates? Those who are wise, strong, and distinguished. But Paul was a fool for Christ's sake. And he says he was weak, and he says he was without honor.

What we need to learn there is that the world's values are completely different from heaven's values. And when we are born and grow up in this world, we have this world's values. And when you are born again, those values don't change immediately.

We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And even if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, those values won't change. Because you must allow the Holy Spirit to change your value system according to the word of God.

And show you the value system that Jesus had in his mind. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2, in verse 16, in the last part, we have the mind of Christ. He didn't say to the Corinthians, you have the mind of Christ.

He says, you are, next verse, you are men of the flesh, babes in Christ. They are babes in Christ, chapter 3, verse 1. So, every Christian doesn't have the mind of Christ. It depends whether you allow the Holy Spirit to give you the mind of Christ.

We must remember one thing, that God will never force us to accept anything. The most valuable thing that God offers people is salvation. He offers it to the world.

But most people in the world don't accept it. And therefore they don't get it. Why doesn't God force people to accept Christ? We force our children to eat something which we know is good for them.

You can force a 3-year-old, but you can't force a 25-year-old. So, God does not treat us like babies. He treats us like grown-up people.

Even if something is good for you, he will tell you it's good for you. But he won't force you to take it. Because you are not a baby.

You are grown-up. And so, God says, this is good for you, but it's up to you to decide whether you want to take it or not. So, Paul was without honour in the world.

So, coming back to the first verse, how do we know that God is honouring us? Some Christians think that if a man can speak well, God is honouring him. But I have found that a lot of politicians can speak much better than Christian preachers. There are many politicians who can keep an audience listening attentively for two hours.

Whereas most preachers after 15-20 minutes, they are boring. So, being able to speak well doesn't mean God has honoured you. We have to clearly understand, how do I know whether God is honouring me or not? Because, if I were to ask you a question, simple question, and if I were to ask you to write down the answer, are you honouring God in your life? I think all of you will say yes.

How do you know? You can imagine that you are honouring God. The only way to know is this. If I honour God, the promise is He will honour me.

So, if He does not honour me, that means I am not honouring Him, whatever I may think. God is very exact. If you go to a shop to buy something expensive, maybe you go to buy a tape recorder.

You say, oh that's very expensive. Then you don't get it. But if you pay the money, you get it.

So, if you come back home without it, then everybody at home knows you didn't pay the money. So, it's like that. With God also, it's a transaction.

You honour Him, He will honour you. If He did not honour you, that means, whatever you may think about yourself, you did not honour Him. So, the only way I can know whether God is honouring me is that the only way I can know whether I am honouring God is by finding out whether He is honouring me.

So, therefore, we need to find out what is the mark of God honouring somebody. In India, the greatest honour that the government can give anybody is called the Bharat Ratna. I don't always agree with the people they give it to.

Sometimes it is given out of some political considerations. But anyway, that is supposed to be the greatest honour in India. What is the greatest honour in heaven? It's not being able to speak well.

It's not getting money. It's not becoming famous in the world. It's not even physical health.

Because Paul didn't have perfect physical health. He had a thorn in the flesh that troubled him constantly throughout his life. What is the greatest thing in heaven? The greatest person in heaven is God Himself.

And what is the greatest gift that God can give anybody? And remember, this is a gift that He has not even given to any of the millions of angels. You may say forgiveness of sins. No, that's not the greatest gift.

You may have got forgiveness of sins. But that is not the greatest gift. You know, I always think of an example in the Old Testament in 1 Kings.

If you read the Old Testament, you will know something about God which you will miss if you don't read the Old Testament. In 1 Kings chapter 21, I want to tell you this story. At that time, the ruler of Israel was the most wicked king of all, King Ahab.

And his wife was worse than him. Her name was Jezebel. So, next door to the king's palace was a very beautiful vineyard that belonged to a God-fearing man called Naboth.

You read about that in the first verse. So, Ahab told Naboth in verse 2, Please give me your vineyard and I'll give you whatever money you want for it. And Naboth said in verse 3 that, The law says that you must not give away the inheritance of your fathers.

In 1 Kings 21, in verse 3, He says that there was a law in the Old Testament. You cannot give the inheritance of your fathers away. And the king got very angry.

And his wife said, I'll arrange that. So, she got some people to falsely accuse Naboth and to kill him. Then Ahab went and occupied his property.

Then God sent a fearless prophet called Elijah. No, a fearless prophet. A prophet who did not fear man.

Elijah was a fearless prophet. And he came to Ahab and said, In verse 19, The last part, the dogs will lick up your blood in the same place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth. And Ahab got very afraid.

And the Lord said to him, I will bring evil upon you, verse 21. And it says here in verse 25, There was nobody like Ahab who did so much evil in the sight of the Lord because of his wife. There was nobody like

Ahab who did so much evil in the sight of the Lord because of his wife.

But when he heard these words, In verse 27, He tore his clothes and lay in sackcloth. Verse 27. See what God says.

To Elijah. Verse 29. Do you see how Ahab humbled himself before me? So, I will not punish him in his days.

He escaped the punishment. So, it did not change him. He was still an evil man.

That is an example in the Old Testament. Man humbled himself. God said, okay, I won't punish you.

If God doesn't punish you, you think that's a great gift? Oh, I did this terrible sin. Thank God, he's not going to punish me. Oh, I did this terrible sin.

Thank God, he's not going to punish me. Ahab could also say that. Oh, I did something terrible.

I killed somebody. Okay, God's not going to punish me. Oh, I did this terrible sin.

Thank God, he's not going to punish me. Many Christians are glorying only in the same thing that Ahab gloried in. Many Christians are glorying only in the same thing that Ahab gloried in.

Oh, God won't punish me. Thank God, I'm not going to hell. As long as we have that mindset, we can say that our mind is not different from Ahab's.

Because he was very happy. Oh, well, that's good. Well, nothing will happen to me.

What is the greatest gift that heaven, God can give to us? It's not saying, I won't send you to hell. But it is to give us his own nature. There is one mark by which God shows his honor upon people.

There is one mark by which God shows his honor upon people. That is to give us his own nature. There is nothing greater that God can give anybody.

Even if he gave you the power to raise up every dead person, that's not a great gift compared to his nature. If God were to say to me, I will heal everybody whom you touch. Or, I'll give you my nature.

I'll say, Lord, give me your nature. What is the use being an angry, lustful man, who heals everybody he touches? I'm not interested. A lot of other people may be interested in that.

Because they don't know what is value in heaven. Because they are blind. See, a blind man does not know the value of things in front of him.

You can give him a small diamond worth thousands of rupees, he'll throw it away, he'll think it's a stone. You give him some big football, he'll probably take that. That's blind.

A person whose eyes are open says, I don't want the football, give me the diamond. It's exactly like that with people in the world. And with a lot of Christians.

Why is it that when God offers a diamond, Christians don't take it? Because they don't realize its value. Jesus spoke a story once, of a man who knew the value of pearls, and one day he found a pearl of great price. And you know what he did? He sold his house, he sold all his property, to buy that one small little

pearl.

Now, I don't know the value of pearls. Somebody can fool me with a false pearl. But if somebody offered me a pearl and said, if you sell your house and give it to me, I'll give you this small little pearl.

I'll say, no thank you, I don't want it. Because I don't know the value of it. That's how Christians don't appreciate the value of partaking of God's nature.

That is what nobody in the Old Testament could have. Only after the day of Pentecost, could people get this wonderful gift of God. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 11, 11, that the least person in God's kingdom, can get more than the greatest in the Old Testament, which is John the Baptist.

He is greater than John the Baptist. Because he can partake of something, which even John the Baptist couldn't partake of. The least person in God's kingdom.

The least person in God's kingdom. So from that verse I learned, that every child of God, can live a more godly life, than everyone in the Old Testament. That means I can live a life better than Elijah, better than John the Baptist, better than Moses, better than every person in the Old Testament.

You also. I'm not saying our ministry will be greater than theirs. I'm not talking about ministry at all.

Elijah's ministry, John the Baptist's ministry, may have been greater than mine. Elijah's ministry may have been greater than mine. Ministry is not the important thing in God's eyes.

And the clearest proof of that is, that when God sent his son to earth for 33 years, for 30 years of that time, he never gave him any ministry. Only 3 years of ministry. What does God think of ministry? He had 33 years of life and 3 years of ministry.

33 years of life and 3 years of ministry. So what is important? So I'm not talking about ministry. I'm saying our life can be superior, to the life of all those people in the Old Testament.

But when you look around at the Christians around you, do you see their life better than theirs? Just look at all the leaders among God's people today. There are thousands of them in the world. But among all those thousands, it's difficult to find one preacher or pastor who does not love money.

But there are many people in the Old Testament who didn't love money. John the Baptist, he was not interested in money. Elijah, when one Syrian general offered him so much gold and silver, Elijah said, no, I don't want it.

So those Old Testament people were free from that. But why is it among Christians, it's difficult to find even one preacher like that today. There are a few, I'm sure.

But one in 100,000 perhaps. And yet Jesus said that everybody in God's kingdom will be greater than Old Testament people. What is the reason? I'll tell you.

Please listen. We're not here to criticize all the other preachers. I'm just warning you not to be deceived by all of them.

We're here to judge ourselves, not other people. We're here to examine our own hearts. When we have a conference one time a year, it'll be profitable if we use it like the medical scan that scans our body.

To allow God to show us what is wrong with us. In a lot of Christian meetings, they hear what's wrong with other people. If you go to a doctor's office, and he shows you the scan of 100 other patients, you say, I'm not interested in seeing all that.

Show me my scan report, I'm not interested in other people. Why don't you do that when you go to God? Lord, I'm not interested in other people's scan report. Show me mine.

That's what I do. I say, Lord, I want to learn something for myself from the failures of others. I want to see if that problem is there with me.

Okay, come back to this question. Why doesn't God give his nature to many of his people? That's because that is the greatest honor that heaven can give. And he gives it only to certain type of people.

To whom? I will honor those who honor me. So if you don't partake of God's nature, it just proves that you are not worthy. If you are not honoring him in your life, how do we know we haven't got God's nature? One of the first proofs is that we get offended so easily.

I have found very few Christians who never get offended. If somebody corrects you and you get offended, that is the clearest proof. You may be a child of God, but you haven't got God's nature at all.

And if somebody praises you and you get puffed up, that also shows that you are not worthy. Because you haven't got God's nature at all. In my lifetime, I have not only had people correct me, I have had people accuse me falsely of so many things.

When I was young, so many elders and preachers rebuked me, corrected me. And if I had got offended, God would never have called me for his service. How can God call somebody for his service who gets offended with some small correction? And in my life, I have also had some people praise me like anything as if I am some great prophet or something like that.

And if that puffs me up, then also God will set me aside. There were people who criticized Jesus and praised Jesus. It didn't make any difference to them.

That is God's nature. That when people criticize you and speak evil of you and correct you, the needle doesn't even move in your heart. It's steady.

You know like these sensitive needles in weighing machines. You put something there and immediately it moves. In the same way, somebody praises you and the needle doesn't move.

That proves that God has done a work in your heart. That's how it was with Jesus. You read in John chapter 8, they called him a devil.

In John chapter 7, they called him a prophet. It was the same term. What is the opinion of a man? When the father said, I am well pleased with you, that is what moved the needle in Jesus' life.

That is my example. I have a needle in my heart which must not be moved. Not even one millimeter by the criticism or the praise of men.

Because they only see the outside. But if God can say one word of approval, that encourages me. If God gives the smallest correction, that should really make my needle move.

And God may correct me about things which other people never correct me because they can't see what is in my heart. That is how I honor God. And wherever God sees that somebody honors him like that, God will honor him.

Your conscience is like a little needle. A small word from God must make it move. You remember how in your unconverted days, you could do so many wrong things and the needle would not even move.

You did wrong things one day and you could go and do wrong things the next day. And the needle wouldn't even move. Because the weighing machine was dead.

When you are born again, the Holy Spirit comes into your heart. He repairs this weighing machine. And it becomes more and more sensitive.

Small small things, the needle begins to move. In the olden days, even one ton you put on it, it doesn't move. And now God has done such a work that one milligram and the needle is moving.

Then you know that God has done a tremendous work in you. Don't be satisfied that you come to meetings. That you pray and sing and all that.

It doesn't mean anything to God. Because people of all religions go to their place of worship. And the most religious people in the world are not Christians.

They are Muslims. They will shut their shops every Friday and go to prayer. Everyone.

There is no place in the world where you see Christians do that. They are busy making money. Whenever it is convenient, they will go do something for God.

And they think, just because they give one or two hours to God in a week, God must be very happy with them. I think the people who deceive themselves the most are Christians. When the Lord called me to leave my job 40 years ago, I spent about 9 years traveling all over this country.

From 1966 to 1975. I traveled to all Christian mission stations, organizations from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. From Gujarat to Nagaland.

Not every place, but I covered a lot of states in this country to see what is the condition of Christianity in India. And at the end of those 9 years, I decided, I'm only talking about myself, I'm not talking about other people. I say, I'm not going to preach to the Hindus and Muslims.

Because I'm ashamed to tell them to come to this type of church. I'm going to spend my life trying to improve the quality of the Christians in this church so that the light will shine a little brighter. I'm not saying that nobody should preach to the Hindus or Muslims.

Each of us has got a different calling in Christ's body. But my calling became very clear to me. You know, Jesus once said about, a man had a hundred sheep and one of them was lost.

Let's turn to that story in Luke 15. Verse 4. A man has a hundred sheep and lost one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one till he finds it? And when he's found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.

And when he comes home, he tells his friends, rejoice with me, I found the sheep which was lost. I tell you, there'll be joy in heaven over once in our repentance and over ninety-nine, there'll be no need to repent. Now, the most important thing in this story is to find out who are these ninety-nine sheep and who is that one sheep.

If I were to ask you, are you in the ninety-nine or are you in the one? What is your answer? Of course, I'm in the ninety-nine. How do you know? Oh, I'm a believer. I accepted Christ seven years ago or ten years ago.

No. That's not what Jesus said. He didn't talk about ninety-nine believers and one unbeliever.

We must read the Bible carefully. I never preach a new doctrine. I just teach people to read the Bible properly, that's all.

I'll show you from the Bible how wrong you are. Who are these ninety-nine people? Please read what Jesus says. Verse seven.

They are ninety-nine righteous persons who don't need any repentance about any sin in their life. They don't need any repentance for any sin. for any sin.

Can you say that you don't need to repent of any sin in your life? How did you say you're in the ninety-nine? The ninety-nine righteous people are people who need no repentance. He himself described the ninety-nine sheep. You say, well, nobody can be in the ninety-nine then.

There are people like that. How? It's not because they are perfect. But listen, as soon as they sin and they know it, they repent.

That means if accidentally you spoke a rude word to your wife or to the peon in your office and you realize that's not the way Jesus would speak, you immediately repent. Oh Lord, I'm really sorry for what I did. If you go to your wife and say I'm really sorry for the way I spoke to you.

When? When? Not after five days. After five minutes. And the person who lives like that concerning every sin as soon as a bad thought comes into his mind or a dirty thought, immediately he repents and goes before God.

Such a person does not need repentance because he's always repenting. He doesn't repent every day, but many times in one day. He's living in repentance.

And Jesus says such people don't need any repentance. See, it's like a floor that's always kept clean. As soon as some dirt comes, immediately you wipe it off.

Most of us, we will clean the floor in our house maybe once a day. Imagine somebody who wipes it off immediately. We can look at such a floor and this floor never needs to be cleaned because it's always been clean.

Those are the people who Jesus calls righteous. And who is this one person? That's the person who needs repentance. So you see how suddenly you discover that you're not in the 99, you may be in the 1. You need to come back to the Lord.

And how? You say, Lord, I want to belong to this 99. I know many years ago when God showed me the truth of this parable that that one person was not an unbeliever. It was a person who did not repent in his life.

He sins and he doesn't repent. He hurts somebody and he won't ask forgiveness. He has a dirty thought and he won't repent.

Somebody corrects him and he gets offended. And he doesn't repent. He gets angry with the person who corrects him.

Instead of being upset with himself that he sinned by getting offended. How does that happen? How the devil makes fools of believers. See, it's like a loving doctor who gives you a scan report showing you you got cancer.

And instead of going and rectifying the cancer in your system and arranging for some surgery instead of that you tear up the scan report and hit the doctor and go away. Does that heal you of your cancer? That is the stupidity that many believers do. They get offended with the person who corrects them.

What a work the devil has done to make fools of God's children. All these things show us one thing that we have not partaken of God's nature. God wants us to partake of His nature.

And that will come if we honor Him. And the first way to honor Him is by being sensitive in our conscience. See, God has made us different from the animals in one area.

Those who have studied in schools and colleges now know that most students believe that man came from the monkey. That means over a period of many millions of years gradually the monkey began to walk and walk and then finally he became like a man. So we have to put a big picture of a monkey on the wall and say that is our father.

Once upon a time that was our father. Because they say the eyes look like man's, the hands look like man's. And if you remove all the hair and all, it looks more like man.

And little by little the facial features change. I thought sometimes Is it only in these physical things that man and monkey are the same? Then these scientists will say you look inside the monkey also, it is similar to a man. It has got all these internal organs just like we have in our body.

But there is one thing which no monkey has. A conscience that tells him there is a God to whom you are answerable. Even in the jungles you find men who have had no contact with civilization kneeling down and praying to some God.

They don't know who the God is. But they know there is a God. You never find a monkey doing that.

No, there is one thing that makes a human being different from all the animals in the world. Conscience. And that proves that that is what will make you different from the animals.

See, what are the main things an animal is interested in? Food, sex, sleep. What are you interested in? Food, sex, sleep. That's okay, but something more also? Nothing more? Then you are like the animal.

No better. There is one thing that makes us completely different. That my conscience is more important than food or sex or sleep.

Every human being is interested in food, sex, and sleep. But true believers have their conscience million times above food, sex, and sleep. If you can say that your conscience is more important than food, sex, and sleep, then you are going in the right direction.

Every day we eat our food. Every day, we must listen to our conscience. If I eat 3 meals a day, I must listen to my conscience 300 times a day.

Then you show, I am not an animal, I am a child of God. But if you don't listen to your conscience and you just eat food and sleep, well, you are no better than an animal. God honors those who honor him.

So, let's seek to do that in our life and say, Lord, this most valuable gift that you have given me of my conscience, I want to value it more than anything else in my life. From this day, I want my conscience to be more important to me than the food I eat. And will you pray like this, Lord, if my conscience is disturbing me about something, I should not get sleep that night.

Till I have said it right. Don't ever say, but it was his fault also. That may be all right, but it's your fault, you must go and set it right.

I remember once, when one of my sons was a little boy, they were playing five years old, they were playing some neighbor boy, and they had some conflict, and they hit each other. So I asked him, why did you hit him? He said, he hit me first. I said, that's okay, he's not a Christian.

You can't do that. I said, we've got to go and apologize to him. But he said, doesn't he have to apologize to me? No, he's not a Christian, he doesn't have to apologize.

So I took my son to that boy's house, and said, say sorry to him. That boy didn't say. That's not my business.

I have to teach my children to keep a good conscience. I hope you teach your children that. I hope you learn it yourself first.

Let's pray. Let's bow our heads before God. You know, it's very easy to forget a message.

In fact, the devil will try his best to make you forget what you heard. You've got to fight the devil if you want to remember what God spoke to you. Say, Lord, I never want to forget what you spoke to me.

Help me. I want you to honor me. In Jesus' name.

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