

# An Ambition to Please God

by Zac Poonen

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*The main ambition of Christians is to please God, and we can do this by offering sacrifices of praise and worship, and by doing good and sharing with others.*

**Duration:** 59:12

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 28:47, John 1:47, 2 Corinthians 5:9

**Topics:** "Pleasing God", "Christian Living"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having an ambition as Christians, focusing on pleasing God whether in heaven or on earth. It highlights the need to prioritize pleasing God above all else, to be driven by one ambition of pleasing Him in heaven, and to experience the joy and excitement of living for God. The speaker encourages honesty and gratitude, urging listeners to seek God's kingdom first, do good, and share with others as sacrifices that please God.

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## Transcript

There's no place like home. I want to turn to a verse in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5. All young people in the world have ambitions and it's good to be ambitious. Particularly in our day we find parents also encouraging their children to be ambitious, to have an ambition in life and not just to live life without any purpose or any aim.

So as Christians also we must have an ambition. You know the only difference is that the ambition of people in the world is different from the ambition of the Christian. So here Paul says he had an ambition and inspired by the Holy Spirit we can be pretty sure that's a good ambition.

He talks in the first few verses about going home to heaven and we get a new body there or being absent from heaven here on this earth. Heaven is our home. But he says it doesn't make a difference whether we are at home in heaven or absent from heaven on this earth.

Verse 9. Therefore we have as our ambition whether we are going to be at home in heaven or absent from heaven on this earth our ambition is to please God. We can be sure of one thing. I think all of you will agree that when people get to heaven they will definitely have only one ambition.

They will not have an ambition to make money when they get to heaven. They will not have any ambition to please an angel. They won't be wondering whether that angel standing over there is happy with me or

not and what that other angel over there thinks about me or what that other man who was a great man on the earth who is in heaven what he thinks about me or what that other preacher thinks about me.

We can be. We will all agree that when we get to heaven we are only going to be driven by one ambition and that is to please God. What I am doing now.

Imagine now if you are in heaven and Jesus has come and we have changed our bodies and now we are in heaven in the presence of our Father. What do you think will be going on through your mind? I don't know what all we are going to do in heaven when we get there. I am sure we are not going to just sit and get bored.

If life on earth is exciting, certainly has been for me, can you imagine how much more exciting heaven is going to be? It's not going to be boring at all. People who don't know God think it's boring. Do you know that the most entertaining and interesting person in the whole universe is God? Have you met people, human beings who are very entertaining to be with and very interesting to be with? They were all creatures made by God.

Can you imagine how much more entertaining and interesting it will be with the creator who made these interesting people? Have you heard people who are very interesting to listen to? Can you imagine how much more interesting it will be to listen to the one who created those people? That's how heaven is going to be. Heaven is not going to be a boring place. It's going to be a million times more interesting than on earth.

But what's going to go through our mind in the midst of all the things we do there? I believe one ambition. To please our heavenly father, to please God. That will be the only thing that will drive us and urge us forward.

And the spiritually minded man is the man who has determined that that is going to be his ambition on earth as well. Heaven came down and glory filled my soul. That's what the Holy Spirit does.

The Holy Spirit brings to our heart the atmosphere of heaven, the peace of heaven, the joy of heaven, the love of heaven, the goodness of heaven, the forgiveness of heaven and the ambition of people in heaven to please God only. So Paul says, it doesn't make a difference to me. I mean, it's like saying whether I'm in this room or that room, it makes no difference.

Whether I'm here on earth or in heaven, ambition is the same. And I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, is that true? When we started as a little fellowship 28 years ago, we were just very few. And I've done this once before.

Will all those who were here 28 years ago when we started, please stand just for a moment. Those who were here 28 years ago when we started. On the first day we started.

On the first day we started. Will you stand? Is that all? One, two, three. Any of the children who were here 28 years ago? Nobody? You were not there? Just did you count how many there are? One, two, three, four, five, six.

That's it. Sit down. That's how we started 28 years ago.

And we had an ambition to please God at any cost. Whatever the cost, we wanted to please God. And it brought upon us a lot of misunderstanding, criticism from many people around us.

We decided to ignore that, not to find fault with them, not to answer back. In 28 years, we have never once answered our critics because God is the one who answers them. I remember when we were taken to court, the lawyer said, you're not supposed to speak a word here.

The lawyer is supposed to say everything. I didn't know the rules. I said, that's how God is.

I'm not supposed to say anything in my defense. God says, don't worry. I'm your lawyer.

I take care of everything. Can you live like that? Life on earth is so wonderful. That's how we have lived for 28 years.

People can say what they like. The Bible says, when people speak evil of you, live in such a way that their lie will be exposed. I'm paraphrasing.

It's from 1 Peter. When people tell lies about you, live in such a way that nobody will believe them. What a challenge.

I don't have to open my mouth. We have sought to please him. We have not made money our ambition, either in the world or in the church.

No. We have not gathered the rich. It didn't make a difference to us whether people were rich or poor.

It was as unimportant to us as the color of their skin or their height. Can you imagine if he said, only those who are above five feet six inches can join this church? A lot of people would have been knocked out. Can you imagine if he said, oh, we'll care only for those who are above a certain salary level? It's crazy.

It's as unimportant. God doesn't care about your height. He doesn't care about the color of your skin.

He doesn't care about your salary. He doesn't care about your intelligence level. He doesn't care about your language.

He loves you because one reason Jesus died for you and therefore you're precious. We were bought by the blood of Jesus Christ and that's what makes me precious. Now, if this book were valued at one crore rupees, even if it's a small book, I'd value it.

There are some ancient books which are very rare, stamps and things like that, which cost a lot of money. It's a small little thing. One little stamp like this costs hundreds of thousands of rupees.

It's not size or appearance. It's what price did you pay for it? And if somebody paid a hundred thousand dollars for a small stamp, one inch square, people look at that stamp and don't know the value of it. They say, yeah, who's going to pay for that? Well, the chap who bought it knows what tremendous price it is.

And that's how I say your price does not depend on what you look like or how clever you are. It depends on what is the price paid for you. That's what makes me have a sense of worth.

You know, the devil is always trying to rob us of our sense of worth before God. He always wants to make you feel that you're worthless because of some defect. And we all have some defect or the other.

I have mine. I know them better than you do. And you have your defects, which you know better than anybody else.

And the devil tends to magnify those defects in your eyes so that you feel yourself worthless. I've heard of psychologists say that children who grow up being made to feel worthless by their parents because of some defect. Maybe they didn't do so well in school or any such thing.

They grow up with tremendous problems, psychological problems throughout their life because their parents, when they were small, made them feel worthless at home. I want to tell you God's not like that. God's not a father who makes anyone feel worthless.

And a spiritual minded man will never make you feel worthless. Never. God is a good God.

And that's one thing we have proclaimed through 28 years. And we have also fearlessly proclaimed that God is a holy God. And that only means when he says he wants you to be free from sin, that only means that he wants you to be healthy.

Don't you think every good father wants his children to be healthy? Which father is there sitting here? You don't want your children to be healthy? How many of your fathers want your children to be 90% healthy? 90% healthy? You're happy they have a few sicknesses? What type of father are you then? God is a good father. He doesn't believe in 90% health. He wants 100% health.

100% health for our soul means total freedom from sin. That's why we have preached total freedom from sin. Would you be afraid to go to a hospital that's determined to get rid of every sickness from your body? Or would you like to go to a hospital which says we'll cure you 90%? Which one would you go to? I know which hospital I'll go to.

I want to be a part of a church that believes in total freedom from sin. Even if the treatment takes a long time, and it has taken a long time for all of us, but we're on the way to recovery. I hope so.

God is a good God. He's a holy God because He's a good God. He's holy and He loves us so much that He wants us to be totally free from sin.

Totally free. Completely. From all sin in our life.

So our ambition is being to please Him. And one of the things that we, one of the verses in scripture that says what pleases God is Hebrews chapter 13. In Hebrews chapter 13, we read in verse 15 and 16, through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.

That is the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise. That is turning us away from ourselves, fixing our attention to God, giving thanks to Him.

And secondly, that is in the vertical direction, giving praise with words to God. In the horizontal direction, verse 16, to other people, don't neglect doing good and sharing. For with such sacrifices, these two sacrifices mentioned here, God is well pleased.

God is pleased with two types of sacrifices. One, when even if it is a sacrifice for you to open your mouth and praise God. And you know the word sacrifice means not something easy to do.

Word sacrifice is always when you may say somebody has sacrificed, it means he has taken some trouble. It was not easy for him, but he did it. And I know the early days when I started opening my mouth to praise God, it wasn't easy.

It was a sacrifice, but I did it and gradually I began to enjoy the sacrifice. And I want to encourage all of you who have never made that sacrifice to begin. Don't wait until it becomes easy because it will never become easy.

It says here, the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips to give thanks to His name. Why was Jesus so excited when out of 10 lepers who were healed and one came back to thank Him? And he said, where are the nine? And I believe as Jesus comes into our midst on Sunday morning, he asks the same question, where are the 90 or 190 who should be praising God for something that God has done? And that is one reason why at the end of our time of praise, we give an opportunity at least for one or two minutes for everybody to open their mouth and praise God, because that is so important. It's a very important part of our life.

It is something that pleases God. Why does it please God? I mean, God has got millions and millions of angels who are praising Him. And who can praise Him, I'll tell you a million times better than you and I can praise Him.

Their praise is so perfect because it's not affected by sin. Why does He want our poor praises? I believe it's for us. It's for our benefit that the Lord asks us to do it.

He wants us to be delivered from the self-centeredness, the poison of self-centeredness that came into the human race on the day that Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Did you know that? That when Adam and Eve sinned, a certain poison came into the human race. It was the poison of self-centeredness.

God is not self-centered. He created man in His image, the Bible says, not to be self-centered. But the devil came and infected Him with the poison of being self-centered.

And ever since that day, every human being that's been born into this world has been born self-centered. You've seen that in your children, right? Have you ever had a child born to you which is not self-centered, which didn't think of itself? No. Every child born into the world is born with that poison of being self-centered.

Jesus came to save us from sin, from this sin of self-centeredness, not just from adultery and murder, but from this sin of self-centeredness. And one way, it's not the only way, but one way in which He delivers us from that self-centeredness is by getting us to turn our attention away from ourselves to God. And to praise Him and thank Him and worship Him for what He has done for us, for what He is, for His almighty power, and for all that He is quite apart from us.

It's worship. When we pray to God, we can be self-centered. In fact, most prayers begin with the words, give me or bless me.

That me is a very important word in prayer, or my children, or my family. And if you look back over the years and years and years when you have prayed to God, you'll find the word me and my family is a very important part of those prayers. Because a lot of prayer can be just self-centered.

And that's why I say you will not become spiritual by praying. You can be the most self-centered person after 50 years of praying, because all you're doing is praying for yourself. But when we praise God, see the 10 lepers came, say, give me healing.

One leper came back and said, thank you, Lord, for healing me. And that man got something more than healing from leprosy. He also got salvation from sin.

He got forgiveness. The other fellows didn't get it. When you come back and praise God for something, you get a little more than all the other ungrateful people around you who only come and ask God for something.

And so that's one of the things that we have spoken about much through these 28 years, to be delivered from self-centeredness, to get our center on God, because that pleases Him. What pleases Him? Not that we praise Him. I think our praise we'll discover when we get to heaven and we really praise Him as we should.

We will discover that the best praise and worship and Thanksgiving meeting we had in CFC was not even a fraction of what real praise is. And some of the wonderful times of praise which we thought we had here were nothing compared to heaven's praise. And why does God want it? He wants it for our sake, to deliver us from self-centeredness.

It's not that He wants a few more 200 people to say something to Him when millions of people are praising Him in heaven. No, for our sake. God does everything for our sake.

It's with such sacrifices that God is pleased. So do you want to please God? And say, Lord, turn my attention away from myself to You. That's why Jesus said, you must live your life in such a way where people see that you're seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness first, and all the other things will be added to you.

Now, all of us are not called to do it in the same way, but I believe that our life, in whatever way God calls you to do it, must be a living demonstration of the fact that as I seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first, the other things will be added to me in life. I don't live for those other things. That's the difference between the worldly person and the other person and us.

We also eat and drink, and we go to the market to buy clothes and food and vegetables and meat. And we send our children to school to get an education. We look for jobs.

We apply for jobs. We get jobs. We have to rent houses or buy houses.

We do so many things that the worldly people do also, but in it all, we don't seek those things first. That's the point. It's a question of not what you have or do, but what are you seeking for? I mean, the animals also eat, and I also eat.

Well, I don't live for the same thing that pigs and dogs live for. I've got bigger goals in life than that. And there must be a demonstration by our life to others that if you seek God's kingdom first, other things will be added to you.

I know it's written in Matthew 6, 33, and we can go around with that verse and show it to others, but it's much better when you can demonstrate it by your life, when we do things which the world cannot explain. I

remember about 39 years ago, a little over 39 years ago, when I put in my resignation letter from the Indian Navy, because I felt God called me to serve him. All my relatives thought I was a fool, and people in the Navy thought I was a fool.

It was the most foolish thing to do when you're a young man, and you've got prospects, and you're going to live for something, to dump all that, and to leave it, and to give away all your money for God's work, as I did. I left my job after eight years of work without a single rupee of saving, giving it all away from God's work. It was the most foolish thing to do, but here I stand today, after nearly 40 years, to show to the world that if you live for God and his kingdom, you're not going to suffer.

No, you may not get those big titles, and honor, and position, and money that the world has, but who wants them in any case? You live your life for a worthwhile cause. Is your life demonstrating the fact that you don't live for this world, you live for God, that you don't seek to please men? I remember the times when I had to say to my senior officers in the Navy, I'm sorry, sir, I can't do that. That's against my conscience.

Is there a testimony in your life that you will not do something against your conscience? And I know what it meant for me. It meant I won't get a promotion. It meant that I'll have to displease my senior officer, and I won't get the promotion everybody wants.

It doesn't matter. I don't live for promotion. I live to please God.

I hope you've had some experiences like that in your life. You may not be called to leave your job, but I hope you've had some experiences where you do what is right, even though you lose something earthly. And that is a testimony that God means more to you than anything on this earth.

And the more experiences you have like that in your life, the more you get to know God, the more your life is a testimony to people. They may not agree with you. They may not believe what you say.

They may not believe in your God. It doesn't make a difference, but your life will speak to them forever, and they'll never forget you. They'll never forget you all your life.

Seek to be one like that. That's what we have preached for 28 years. I remember when a few years ago, I met an admiral, retired admiral in the Navy at one of the functions.

Of course, he knew me very well. And he said he could never forget what, you know, more than 35 years ago, how I chucked everything and gone. And he couldn't believe it.

I was amazed when he said that to me, that he had remembered that for 35 years. He probably didn't remember 101 other things, but he remembered this, that there was one young man whom he knew 35 years ago, who chucked everything to serve Jesus Christ. My brothers and sisters, be a living testimony to the people in your office, your neighbors, your relatives, that Christ means everything to you.

That you will, in whatever way it is, for example, when people get angry and shout at you, that you don't fight back. That is a testimony. Let them say what they like about you.

If you live for the world, you'd fight back for your rights and your reputation, but you don't. Your life is here to please God. It's not self-centered.

With such sacrifices, God is pleased. Otherwise, all the words we sing on Sunday morning are empty words. There must be actions in our life where we have sacrificed something for God and proved to the world that that proves that God is more important to me than this world.

Sacrificed, as I said, perhaps the opportunity of a promotion, because you stand for the truth and you will not do what is wrong. That you will not harm another person, no matter how much your boss tells you to harm that person. I'm sorry, sir, I can't do that.

It's against my conscience. Very respectfully, in humility, but with conviction. That's our calling.

That's our sacrifice of praise to God. And the other is in the horizontal direction. It says here that we're to do good and share.

Verse 16. We live, particularly in India, in a country of tremendous need and poverty. And what an opportunity there is for those of us whom God has blessed in so many ways to do good to other people who are not as fortunate as we are.

And here is where we can see our self-centeredness, perhaps very clearly, when we think of ourselves. I'll never forget reading about John Wesley, that when he was working in Oxford or somewhere, he was earning a certain salary before he became a full-time preacher. And he lived at a certain standard.

His salary doubled, he lived at the same standard. His salary tripled, he lived at the same standard. I'm not surprised that God chose that man to be his servant.

See, he decided that if I can live simply, I can use a little more of what I have for God. Very few people like that. I mean, don't be surprised that God used John Wesley.

There's rewards people exactly according to what he sees. So it says here, let us do good and share, for which such sacrifices God is pleased. I mean, I think there are very, very few Christians who have done good and shared to the extent where it became a sacrifice.

Now, if a man gets 10 lakhs of rupees in a year, okay, there are people earning that type of salary nowadays. And he gives one lakh for God's work. That's no sacrifice.

I mean, it's good that he gave one lakh for God's work. But if a man lives on nine lakhs a year, do you think that's a sacrifice? I'm not saying that's not commendable. It's commendable if a man gets 10 lakhs a year, and he gives one lakh to God.

There are very few people who do that. But all I'm saying is not a sacrifice. But here speaking about a sacrifice.

There are very, very few Christians who have sought to serve others when it has cost them a lot. And I'm not talking only about money, when it has cost them inconvenience, when it has cost them having to set aside their own plans, having to give up certain things that they wanted to do, and inconvenience for their family and inconvenience. I mean, they didn't have enough time to do many things that they wanted to do, because they had to serve other people.

God has given this church elder brothers like that. And that is why I say, you got to appreciate them. If you appreciate a man just because of the way he preaches, you might as well go and listen to the politicians.

They preach better. God hasn't given many people the gift of preaching. Just like in a class, one person can come first.

So what? But how many people can be good in that class? Only one? Only one can come first. We all can be good, right? Okay, there may be only one out of about 500 people who can preach well. But what about doing good, and sharing, and sacrificing to bless other people, and going through a little inconvenience so that you can bless others? Which among us can't do that? Instead of always moaning, oh, I can't preach, I can't preach like that brother can do.

You're wasting your time. The thing you can do, you're not doing. Dear brothers and sisters, that's how Jesus lived.

The Bible says Jesus went about doing good, and delivering people from the oppression of the devil. He didn't deliver people from the oppression of the devil for 30 years. That he did after he was anointed.

So if you don't have the gift of delivering people from Satan, don't worry. But he did do something in the first 30 years. He did good.

You think he did good only after he was 30? No, he did good all his life. And that's something even little children can do. Do good to others, do a little sacrifice, to give up some convenience to bless other people.

That shows I'm not self-centered. You see, if I can sacrifice some of my own convenience, and a little bit of my health, and my energy, and my plans, and my own conveniences, so that I can bless and help other people, that is a indication that this world is not everything. Animals won't do that.

No. Most human beings won't do that, because they live at the level of animals. But a true disciple of Jesus Christ would do that, because that's how his master lived on earth.

Jesus Christ came to earth not only to die for our sins, but to demonstrate to this world how every man should live. We've preached that for 28 years. When we say that Jesus came in our flesh, we're saying that that is how God wanted every man to live.

It is an example he gave us, how we're supposed to live on the face of this earth. And that's why we have spoken so much through these years, to look at the example of Jesus, to seek to live like him, to speak to others the way he spoke, to seek to forgive others the way he forgave others, to be willing to do lowly jobs for other people, never to think that you have become such an important person that you can't wash somebody's feet. I want to be willing to wash people's feet, or clean the toilets, till the end of my life, even if I live to the age of 90.

I don't want to be so big, or so famous, that I'm too proud to clean the toilets, or wash somebody's feet, or pick up somebody's chapels and give it to him. Don't ever get such thoughts. Jesus was not like that.

He was a servant, proving to us that that's the greatest thing you can ever be on earth. The greatest thing you can ever be on earth is not a king, or a president. It's a servant.

How do I know? Because that's what Jesus was. And he was the greatest person that walked on the earth. And he has shown me how to live.

And I don't live by the empty standards of the world, that make a man a director, or a king, and make him the great person, or a person who's very clever, or intelligent. Jesus didn't go around showing off his intelligence. We have a lot of preachers today, who preach in such a way, it goes way above your heads.

And if you put out your hand also, you can't catch it, what they're trying to say. It's so high above your heads. Jesus never spoke like that.

He spoke in such a way that even children could understand. And if you're proud of your intelligence, you're not like Jesus Christ. No.

If you're proud of your salary, or proud of anything, Jesus was a servant. He taught us that is the greatest thing you can ever be on this earth. He did good, and shared, and with such sacrifices, God is pleased.

So as we seek to please God, we almost always think of these two directions, and see, Lord, in 28 years, or as many number of years as you've been here, listening to the message, how much have we grown in these two directions, in seeking to please God, and praise Him, and be centered in God, and not in ourselves. And how much have we sought to do good to others, and to share what God has done, to share with others what God has given us so freely. You know, we can learn from the Old Testament.

And I'll tell you, one of the things we can learn from the Old Testament, is why did God choose the Israelites, and then reject them? You got my question? Why did God choose the Israelites, and then reject them? Because if He is the same today, it's possible He may choose you, and then set you aside. Shall I tell you why? It was for two reasons, in a nutshell. One, they did not seek to glorify God.

And secondly, they did not share with others what God had given them. If you can learn those two lessons from the Old Testament, they are very important lessons. Let me show you a verse in the book of Deuteronomy, in chapter 28.

Verse 47 and 48. Because you didn't serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart for the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies. Why is it many Christians are defeated by sin? Those are our enemies today, are afraid of Satan, who is our enemy.

Shall I give you a reason? Let me read it from the Living Bible. You will become slaves to your enemies because of your failure to praise God for all that He has given you. You'll be a slave because you failed to praise God for all that He gave you.

He gave you a hundred things, and because that one extra thing He didn't give, you complained. And you spent all your life complaining about that one prayer that was not answered. That's the only thing fixed in your mind.

God didn't answer this prayer. God didn't answer this prayer. God didn't answer this prayer.

And you forgot the thousand and one things He already gave you, and never praised Him for that. Because of your failure to praise God for all the good things He gave you, you will be a slave to your enemies. And that's why God rejected Israel.

God had done so much for them, they were not grateful to Him. They were not thankful. The first step to backsliding is when we stop giving thanks.

I want to say to you, learn to give thanks. I have often recommended to those who complain about not having enough in their home, or their house is not big enough, or my husband didn't get me a new sari, or daddy and mommy didn't buy me new clothes or new shoes, or that sneakers especially which I wanted, my parents couldn't buy for me. I have one recommendation to all such people.

Take a walk for half an hour through the slums of Bangalore in the area called a thousand huts. Just walk through there for, you just open your eyes, walk through there for half an hour, and come back home and tell me how many complaints you have. Man is a miserably selfish creature.

And one of the clearest marks of his selfishness is that he's not thankful to God for what God has given him. Even though he's got a thousand things more than people sitting, living one mile away from him. He doesn't think about that.

He doesn't think about that one prayer that God did not give, that one prayer God did not answer. And our children grow up to be like that. Children are tremendously ungrateful to their parents for what all the parents have sacrificed for them.

And when the parents are very conscious of that, I want to ask the parents whether you are thankful to God, your creator, for all that he's done for you. I'm sure you can see very clearly how ungrateful your children are. I hope you can see equally clearly, equally clearly, how ungrateful you have been to God for all that he's done for you.

The one mark of spiritual growth is that complaining disappears from our life because we are more aware of his goodness. And if there are one or two things God did not give us, we can be absolutely sure that it is for our good that he didn't give it to us. That's a mark of a mature Christian.

Some things we don't give our children. You don't give a knife into the hand of a one-year-old. You don't give a 500 rupee note into the hand of a two-year-old.

A knife and a 500 rupee note are good things, but you don't give it to your children no matter how much they cry. And when God withholds some things from us, it is for our good. And we've learned to know that.

We thank him and praise him for withholding things from us. We not only thank and praise God for what he has given us, the mature Christian has learned to thank and praise God for what he didn't give us. Have you ever thanked God for what he did not give you? Have you ever thanked God for the prayers he did not answer? For the job you did not get selected for? For the college you did not get admission in? For the person you could not marry? Have you ever given thanks to God for these things? Or it's only for the things we give.

We must move on to see God as a good God who has we praise him for all things. And that's why the mature Christian filled with the Holy Spirit has learned to give thanks for everything, in everything, for everything, and for everyone. Because our Father controls the universe.

And we have learned that. And we praise him and thank him. And it's a sacrifice in the beginning, but after a while it's not a sacrifice at all.

It's enjoyable. That's how God wants our life to be. He has planned everything for our good.

Let's learn to thank him for the abundance. It says here, the abundance of all things. What a verse.

Verse in verse 47, the abundance of all things. And I think all of us have to say through the years, I've observed that not only in CFC here, but in all of our churches. That everybody who has come to the churches, to our church and has honored God, it has gone well with them, even materially.

I mean, you may have thought it was your own cleverness or something. If you're foolish to think like that, I feel sorry for you. But it was not your cleverness, my brother, sister.

You could have been paralyzed 10 years ago and you would not be earning what you're earning today. It's been God's goodness to you and to your children. And don't ever, ever, ever forget that.

We have had an abundance of all things, even materially. And if you're not thankful for those things, then we don't grow. I mean, God is sad.

And I want to say this, that as we think of all these 28 years that God has provided for us, that encourages us as we look into the future. I don't know what difficult days are coming in India, but how can I have faith in the future? One, through God's word. And secondly, through our own experience in the past.

Turn to this song. I just, I want to read some. I'm not going to sing it.

We're just going to read this word in hymn number 308 in this book. It's a very lovely hymn. I just want to read a few verses, particularly verse 3 of hymn number 308.

His love in time past forbids me to think he'll leave me at last in trouble to sink. How do you know that you won't sink in the future? Well, one, God's word. Secondly, he's not allowed me to sink for 28 years.

You know, they boasted about the Titanic, that it was the one unsinkable ship, and it sank on its first voyage. Somebody said even God Almighty cannot sink the ship. Yeah, when somebody says something like that, you can be pretty sure it'll sink in its first voyage.

But there is one ship that will never sink, and that is the church. Never. And the devil and all his hosts are not going to sink.

A church built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, particularly a church, not perfect church, but a church that's trying to please God. I hope we are a church like that. That's what we want to be, even more in the days to come than today.

And there, each of us has a part to play in it. It's not just one person who determines whether the church is going to please God. You are a part of that.

You know, one little finger. If you get a terrible infection in your finger, it can be so bad that you may have to take leave from your work and lie down in bed because of this tremendous pain in one little finger. That's how a body is.

And you may be just a little finger. And you can cause a lot of pain to the whole body, because we are sought to be a body. We want to please God.

Every part of this body wants to please God. So his love in time past prevents me from thinking, even thinking, that at last he'll leave me. You know, like somebody carrying me across the river and halfway says, oh, I'm fed up of you.

I'm going to leave you. No, he's not going to dump me halfway. He's going to carry me through.

Each sweet Ebenezer, Ebenezer means a stone of help. God has helped me in the time past. I have in review confirms to me his good pleasure to carry me through.

Since all that I meet shall work for my good, the bitter is sweet, the medicine is food, though painful at present will cease before long. And then, oh, how pleasant the conqueror's song. Verse two, if dark be my way, since he is my guide, it is mine to obey, it is his to provide.

And though the cisterns may be broken and creatures means and fellow human beings may fail, the word he has spoken will surely prevail. Song 307, verse one, similar vein, though troubles assail and dangers affright, though friends should all fail and foes all unite, yet one thing secures us, whatever betide the scripture assures us, the Lord will provide. Two beautiful songs, those two songs.

I just want to say that the Lord has provided for us in amazing ways in these 28 years, and I believe he's going to carry us through. So if we can improve in these two areas and say, Lord, make me more like Jesus, to live more for the things of God and less for the things of myself, and God will take care of the things concerning you, that this year as we look towards the future is going to be a year of greater sacrifice to stand up for our convictions, greater sacrifice to live to please God and not just ourselves. We're going to factor God into every situation.

We're going to factor God into all our plans for the future. And secondly, that we're also going to think of others a little more. Others, Lord, yes, others.

Let this my motto be, help me to live for others that I might live like Thee. Do you know that Jesus would never have come to this earth if it were not for others? Was there any reason for Jesus to come to this earth to get something for himself? Did he want some more money to take back to heaven? Did he come here to get some honor from some people to take back to heaven? What did he come to earth for? Was there a single thing he wanted from this earth? Tell me. Try and think of a single thing he wanted from this earth other than you and me.

Nothing. I think we have all said we want to be disciples of Jesus. Those can be empty words if your ambition is not the same.

I think I can honestly say to God that I don't want a single thing on this earth. If I can live for the glory of God and bless other people. And I'm not saying that now when all my children are grown up and working and I'm nearly 64 years old.

I said that when I was 21. I said that when I was 21. I said, Lord, I don't want to live for this earth.

Not at all. It's not worth it. And I'm thankful that I understood it then so that I lived a worthwhile life.

And I want to say to all of you young people, if you can be gripped by this in your early 20s and determine no matter what the cost, no matter how much other Christians around you are backslidden, no matter even if other young people around you in CFC are backslidden, you hold to this vision. I will not live for myself. I will live for God.

Never mind even if your parents are backslidden. Don't judge them. Don't criticize them.

Take your eyes off them and fix them on Jesus and say, Lord, I want to live for you. I don't want to speak words that are empty. I want to be a disciple.

You know, one of my greatest ambitions in addition to pleasing God has been to get this commendation from Jesus Christ. Of course, we all want a commendation when Christ comes again. Well done, good and faithful servant.

We all want that. But there's another thing which I wanted on this earth before I reach heaven. And that's not the commendation.

Oh, you are perfect. I will never get that. I know that.

Oh, you are so holy. I don't know whether God can say that about me. But there's another commendation which everyone sitting here can have today.

Not tomorrow. You don't have to wait 10 years for this today. It's an easy thing if you want it.

That commendation is the commendation that Jesus gave to Nathanael in John chapter one and verse 47. Jesus looked at Nathanael and said, Here is an Israelite in whom there is no guile. Or as the Living Bible says, Here comes an honest man.

You can't get a commendation. Here comes a perfect man or a perfect woman. Here comes a holy man or holy woman.

Here comes a perfectly loving man or loving woman. Okay, that will take years. What about an honest man, honest woman? How long does it take to get that commendation? Supposing you are the filthiest sinner in Bangalore.

Okay? And you happen to be here this morning. You're welcome. I hope you'll come again.

Please come as often as you can. This is the place where you can be healed. Supposing you are the worst sinner in Bangalore.

Can such a person be honest or not? What do you think? Does it take 10 years to be honest? Today, sitting here, he or she can say, I am the worst sinner in Bangalore. God says, There is an honest man. There's an honest woman.

And I want to tell you, my brothers and sisters, that is the commendation that I have sought for from God here on this earth every day. Let me take 50 years for me to be perfect. Let me take years to get victory over some sin.

But I want to be an honest man. And I'll tell you something. My experience the past 28 years in CFC.

There are some brothers in our midst who are very radical. They do a lot of things for the church. But they're not so honest.

And there are others who are not so victorious. They're defeated. But they're honest.

And I personally have found more fellowship with those less radical, but honest people than these so-called radical people who are doing so many things in the church, but who tell lies. My greatest difficulty has been with brothers and sisters who tell one lie, which is not true. I find it impossible to

fellowship with them, because the devil is the father of lies.

I have found very easy to fellowship with sinners who are honest. Because God finds it easy to tell a lie. Take it for what it is worth.

If you have found it difficult to fellowship with me, it's because you're not an honest person. And you imagine that you have fellowship with God, you don't. I want to say to you something, my dear brothers and sisters, we don't see ourselves as we really can, as we really should rather.

You think you're a wonderful person. You're not. Let me tell you, I'm sorry to disappoint you.

But you're not. Pray this prayer. I've prayed it.

Lord, help me to see myself as you see me, not as I see myself. We all see ourselves as pretty spiritual, right? Don't you think you're quite a spiritual person? Just ask God to give you a revelation of yourself. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, I don't see myself clearly.

I see through a glass darkly. One day I will know myself as God knows me. That's what he said at the end of 1 Corinthians 13.

When I look into my face, it's not a clear mirror. How many of you have the honesty to acknowledge that you don't see yourself clearly? You're not as spiritual as you think you are. I fall down many times on my face before God and say, God, I may be fooling myself.

I may not be as spiritual as I think I am. I'm not. Please show me.

Give me light on myself. And I'll tell you something. Sometimes God gives us light directly.

Sometimes he gives us light through other godly men. Are you willing? Or you say, no, no, no, no. I don't want any godly men.

I get light only from God. Well, you just live in deception. You're doomed to a life of self-deception.

I thank God for the church where I can get light on myself, to see my self-centeredness, to see where I'm not centered in God, where I'm not seeking to do good to others and share. I thank God for godly brothers in my life who have helped me to see myself a little more clearly. And God tests us.

He didn't come to David and say, you are the man. He sent Nathan, the prophet, to tell David, you're the man. David could have rejected him.

Many times you read in the Old Testament, God sent a prophet to a king. God never came himself. He sent a prophet to a king and said, this is what you are like.

The king wouldn't listen. He was absolutely convinced that he was okay. God said, okay, go your way.

And you see the fate of those kings. Yeah. The second reason why God rejected Israel was they never sought to bless other people with what God had given them.

One was they were not thankful to God. And the other, they didn't seek to bless the rest of the world. They thought we are the only ones whom God has chosen.

We're the ones whom God is going to bless. And when our church becomes like that, God's going to not be here. God has placed us to bless others.

And I thank God, particularly in the last few years, how God has given us that opportunity. You may not all travel. You see, it's the heart and the liver do a lot of things which make the hands work.

So we work as a body. And it may be only some who have the opportunity to go in here and there. But as a church, we seek to be a blessing to other people.

And we want to be even a much greater blessing to the rest of India and to the rest of the world in the days to come. Let's pray. Let's bow our heads before God.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who are aware of their own need, for the entire kingdom of heaven is theirs. Will you pray that God will save you from self-deception? Help you to see yourself this morning as God himself sees you. And with brokenness and humility, come before him and say, Lord, I've lived enough of my life in self-deception.

I want to value my brothers and sisters in the church a little more from now on. I don't want to just get the benefits of being part of CFC in terms of blessing and understanding. I want to grow spiritually.

Please help me, Lord. I'm a needy person. Perhaps I am the greatest sinner in Bangalore, and I don't know it.

God, help me to see it. Perhaps he was speaking about me. It's me, Lord.

Not my brother, not my sister. It's me. Lord, help us to come before you in brokenness, because the broken and contrite spirit and heart you will not despise.

You will revive. And we all want to be revived. Thank you, Lord.

We want to praise you with all of our heart for your tremendous goodness, the abundance of good things that you've given us, that we can give thanks to you and use them to bless other people. In Jesus' name, amen.

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