

# God's Guidance Through Circumstances of Life

by Zac Poonen

---

*God is the God of Providence and can control our circumstances, guiding us through the circumstances of life to fulfill His will.*

**Topics:** "God's Providence", "Trust in God's Guidance"

---

## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that God is the God of Providence, who controls our circumstances to guide us in His will. He explains that while we must accept circumstances ordained by God, we should resist those arranged by Satan. Poonen illustrates this through biblical examples, such as Paul and Silas in Philippi and the missionary journeys of David Livingstone and Adoniram Judson, showing how God uses adverse situations for His purposes. He encourages believers to trust in God's sovereignty, recognizing that disappointments can lead to divine appointments. Ultimately, Poonen reassures that God is in control and desires His children to navigate life with His guidance.

---

## Transcript

God is the God of Providence. He can control our circumstances and thereby indicate His will. He allows certain things to befall us, either to confirm the guidance we have received through the witness of the Spirit, or to stop us from taking a wrong step. As George Muller has said, "The stops of a good man, as well as his steps are ordered by the Lord" (cf. Psa. 37:23).

Circumstances ordered of God must be submitted to and accepted, whereas those arranged by Satan must be resisted. If we are not sure we can pray something like this, "Lord, I do not know whether this situation is of Thy ordering or from Satan. But I do want Thy perfect will at any cost. Save me from being deceived and thus missing Thy best. If this is from Thee, I accept it joyfully. If it is from Satan, I resist him and bind him in Thy Name." The Lord will preserve our way and make all things work together for our good if we are sincere before Him and live according to His commandments (Prov. 2:8; Rom. 8:28). Satan hindered Paul from going to Thessalonica, but Timothy went instead and God's purposes were still fulfilled (1 Thess. 2:18; 3:1,2).

We find a number of cases of circumstantial guidance in the Acts of the Apostles. God used persecution to scatter the church from Jerusalem for the spread of the gospel (Acts 8:1). Paul and Barnabas moved from one place to another whenever persecution increased to such an extent that there was no point in staying

(Acts 13:50,51; 14:5,6,19,20). This was in accordance with the Lord's own precept and example (Matt. 10:23; John 7:1). God used a famine to take Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Acts 11:28-30), where they learnt the power of importunate prayer (Acts 12:5). Coming back to Antioch, they imparted this spirit of prayer to their fellow-workers and this finally resulted in the extension of the work to distant regions (Acts 12:25-13:3).

Adverse circumstances in Philippi were used of God to lead Paul and Silas to preach the gospel to a needy jailor (Acts 16:19-34). The last eight chapters of Acts reveal how God used circumstances to lead Paul to preach the gospel to a number of people whom he would not normally have met (cf. Phil. 1:12).

Some of the world's greatest missionaries were guided to their fields by circumstances. David Livingstone initially felt led to go to China and took medical training in preparation for service in that land. When he was ready to go, China was "closed" because of the opium war. The London Missionary Society suggested the West Indies. He turned it down on the grounds that there were many doctors there already. Finally, through contact with pioneer missionary Robert Moffat, Livingstone went to Africa.

Adoniram Judson felt challenged to serve as a missionary in India and accordingly set sail from America. On arrival, in India he was not permitted to stay by the authorities. While in Madras, he was told to leave the country by a certain date. He was therefore compelled to board the only boat leaving Madras before that date. The boat was bound for Burma and Judson spent the rest of his life there.

The work that these two men accomplished for God in these lands clearly proves that it was God who had ordered the circumstances that led them there.

God may prevent us from going into paths He has not chosen for us by putting us on a sick bed or by making us miss a train, an appointment or an interview. Disappointments can be His appointments for us, if we live under His Lordship. When we do not obtain something we greatly longed for and prayed for, we can be sure that God has something better in store for us.

Missing a train and the delayed arrival of a boat once led me to speak to a needy soul who opened his heart to the Lord that very night. Transfer to a ship that I did not like was once God's means of leading me to a young sailor who gave his life to the Lord and was baptized. God makes no mistakes. He is the God of Providence. We can trust Him to order our circumstances for His glory and for our good.

We can ask God at times to reveal His will by altering circumstances, when we find an obstacle in our path. When the Lord called me to resign my commission as an officer in the Indian Navy in May 1964, and I applied for resignation, my application was promptly rejected by the Indian Naval Headquarters. Circumstances were thus contrary to what I felt to be the witness of the Holy Spirit within me. I prayed that the Lord would alter circumstances and release me from the Navy and make that a confirmation of His call. I applied three times for permission to resign my commission. Finally after two years I was released. It was then evident to me that the initial hindrance had been engineered by Satan. Yet God overruled it, to strengthen my faith in His total authority over governments and earthly powers and to teach me more of His ways.

Indeed, He is the One who has the key to every door. When He opens a door, no one can shut it, and when He shuts a door, no one can open it (Rev. 3:7). Even a king's heart can be turned by our God in any direction He chooses (Prov. 21:1; cf. Ezra 6:22).

God may also lead us contrary to circumstances. When the first wave of persecution swept Jerusalem, the apostles did not run away but prayed for boldness. God filled them with His Spirit and made Jerusalem tremble at the manifestation of His power, for His time had not yet come for the disciples to be scattered (Acts 4:29-33; 5:11-14).

When Philip left Samaria for the desert road, it was contrary to circumstances, which called for him to remain in Samaria where he was being greatly used (Acts 8:26).

Circumstances are thus, not always an indication of God's will. They must be considered only in conjunction with, and in subjection to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit within our spirits, and His witness through the Bible. God does not expect His children to be pawns moved around by circumstances. He is the Lord of circumstances and He wants His children to share in His mastery over them.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/gods-guidance-through-circumstances-of-life/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**