

# Seven New Year Prayers

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen encourages believers to replace New Year resolutions with seven transformative prayers focused on living in God's presence and maintaining a clear conscience.*

**Duration:** 57:29

**Scripture:** Acts 24:16

**Topics:** "New Year Prayers", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of making New Year prayers instead of resolutions. It focuses on seven key areas to pray for throughout the year: setting the Lord always before us, keeping a good conscience, depending on God through prayer, rejoicing always, dying to self daily, speaking graciously at all times, and abounding in the work of the Lord consistently.

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## Transcript

In the world, many people make New Year resolutions which last about a week or two. But instead of making a New Year resolution or decision, I want to suggest that we make some New Year prayers. So that's what I want to speak about.

It's good to take decisions, but if we don't pray and ask the Lord to help us, we're never going to be able to keep them. So I want to mention seven things that it's good for us to pray for this year. We have 365 days a year, 366 in the leap year, and 24 hours a day.

And there are certain things that the Bible says we must do always, not just every day, but always. So those are the things I want to look at with you and convert them into prayers that the Lord will help us to do them always. The first verse I want you to turn to is in Acts chapter 2. It's in the first gospel message that was preached on the day of Pentecost.

You know that many Old Testament scriptures were fulfilled in the life of Jesus in the New Testament. So here we see one of those Old Testament verses being fulfilled where it was fulfilled in the life of Jesus, and Peter speaks about it. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

He was filled with the Spirit. This is the first time that those apostles were filled inwardly with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke forth prophetically. And here is what we read in Acts 2.25. David says about Jesus, I set the Lord, or I saw the Lord always in my presence.

Now this is a quotation from the Old Testament in Psalm 16 and verse 8. David never could keep it. If he had kept the Lord always in front of him, he would never have sinned with Bathsheba. He would have never done many other things.

He wouldn't have married eight wives. But in the Psalms, I think many of the Psalms David wrote before he was 30 years old, and when he was really a man after God's own heart, later on in life, he wasn't really living as a man after God's own heart. But in those Psalms that he wrote, like Psalm 16, I've set the Lord always before me.

I think that was, to some extent, true in his life in his early days. Just like a lot of Christians today who start off very well and they don't end very well, because usually what happens is either they become rich or proud or have everything they need in this world, and then they drift away from God. Well, that's what happened to David.

But in his early days, he set the Lord always before him. And that is a prophetic reference to Jesus, because it says here David was actually speaking about Jesus, saying, I've set the Lord always in my presence. It's something we have to practice.

And after a while, we'll do it without even effort. You see, if you throw a man into a river who doesn't know how to swim, he just flounders and drowns. But even if a man is asleep and you throw him into the sea, if he knows how to swim, he'll immediately start swimming, because he's practiced it for years.

But in the beginning, when anybody learns to swim, it's not easy. It's something difficult, and people don't want to go regularly for practice. It's like anything, learning to play the piano.

There are people who can, you know, once you've done something so many times, you can do it, and people play the keyboard without looking at it at all. People play chess blindfolded, and most of us won't be able to play chess probably even with our eyes open. There are people who can play blindfolded and win, because they're so used to it.

There's something that we need to learn, that if there's something we initially develop as a habit, slowly work on it, work on it, work on it, afterwards it'll be something we can do blindfolded and without any effort almost. A lot of things in our life are like that, which we, you don't think in the morning before going and brushing your teeth. Nobody has to remind you, but little children have to be reminded.

So this is something which I want to encourage you, which I think most Christians have never developed, and that's the reason why they have so many problems, to develop the habit of living in the Lord's presence, to recognize I have set the Lord always before me. I mean, if Jesus did it, then surely that's a good example for us to follow. And it says about Jesus, I saw the Lord, that's the Father, always in my presence, and he's at my right hand, so I will not be moved.

That was the reason that nothing could shake Jesus' life, whether it was a storm on the sea, or some problems people came to him with, or being captured in Gethsemane. He wouldn't be shaken. You could say in Gethsemane, whom are you seeking? Jesus of Nazareth.

Okay, I'm he. Take me. Let these others go.

There was nothing that could shake Jesus' life because he always kept the Father before him. And I want to encourage all of you, my brothers and sisters, we who have struggled and failed and struggled and

failed so many times in past years, why not develop this habit this year? Whenever you think of it, number one, always I want to set the Lord before me. I want to see him.

I see the Lord before me. Whenever I'm tempted to do something which is wrong, to say something to hurt someone, to recognize Jesus is here in front of me, whatever I have to say, let me say it in his presence. Whatever I have to do, even if I'm all alone in a room, let me do it in his presence.

If you're uncertain whether a financial transaction is righteous or not, set the Lord in your presence and you'll know immediately. It's one of the wonderful things. Once you develop this habit and it becomes a practice with you, without effort, you recognize in all situations, hey, the Lord is here.

Can't do it. I believe that was a great secret of Jesus' life. And he goes on to say, therefore I will not be shaken, and therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exalted.

There were many things that flowed out from his keeping the Father in front of him always. You know, many commands that we find in Scripture difficult to obey are because we don't begin here, to keep the Lord in front of us always. This is what we're going to do in all eternity.

I've often said that our life on earth is giving us a foretaste of what we're going to have in eternity. And in the book of Revelation, we read one of the things we're going to have in eternity in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 3. There won't be any curse there. The throne of God and of Islam will be there.

And his bondservants will serve him and they will see his face. That doesn't sound like a great thing to many people. But to me, one of the most glorious things in eternity is that I'm going to be able to see my Father face to face.

I'm going to see Jesus face to face for all eternity. And there's never a moment when I want to lose that vision of him. I believe in some wonderful way.

I can't understand how it will be. But I'm going to be able to see his face all the time. And one of the great blessings of the gift of the Holy Spirit that came on the day of Pentecost is to be able to enable us to have a foretaste of that now.

What David could not do. Many of you have been believers for many years. And after having become a believer, you have committed some sins which even unbelievers would not commit.

You say, you're born again. I'm a child of God. You misunderstood grace.

As though grace means I can do what I like. All types of things that believers do. All types of ways in which believers speak.

Which are a tremendous dishonor to God's name. And you don't realize that all those occasions the devil is there in the heavenlies as you read in the book of Job saying to God, look at this child of yours. Do you see what he's doing right now? He says he's born again.

Do you see the way he's speaking now? He says he's born again. And what is the solution to it? It should bring a deep repentance as we look back over our past life and say, Lord, how shall I make sure that I never do that again? Things that dishonor you, things that make the devil accuse me to you. And you know, God has to keep his mouth shut.

Because it's true what you're doing. I've said to the Lord always before me, dear brothers and sisters, let's begin the new year saying, Lord, this year I want to develop one habit. Number one.

To live in the presence of God all the time. To always be aware that I am in the presence of Jesus Christ. Many of us like to have a verse like Lo, I'm with you always, even unto the end of the world.

I've seen it in many homes. Do you really want that? Do you think if you were aware of that presence of the Lord always in front of you, you would have done some of the things that you're ashamed of now after becoming a believer? No. You wouldn't have done it.

You would have shrunk back immediately. So, if we want to avoid repeating all those things that we are ashamed of now in our past life after we became a believer, then develop this habit. Lord, help me to see you always before my face.

And pray that the Holy Spirit will make that a reality in your life. Then, secondly, the Apostle Paul said to believers, follow me as I follow Christ. So Jesus has given us, I mean the Holy Spirit has given us, not only Jesus as an example, but for those who cannot accept that high standard of Christ, Paul as an example who followed Christ.

You know, because some people will say, Oh, that was Jesus. I can't live like him. No, I believe we can, because the Bible says that he came and was tempted like us, and so we can live like him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But for those who cannot take that step immediately, God gives us an intermediate step to help us to get there. See, what about Paul? Can you live like Paul? Do you believe Paul was like you? Okay, take Paul as an example for you until you mature to the place where you can say Jesus is your example. Or sometimes God gives us human beings whom we know, godly men and women whom we come across.

And the Lord says, if you can't see Jesus as your example, take this man as an example. He's at least like you. Take that as a first step to then rise up to make Jesus himself your example.

Follow me as I follow Christ. So, looking at Paul, here's something that he said he did always. Acts 24 and verse 16.

Again, we find that word always that we saw in Acts chapter 2. Here it says, first of all, in verse 15, I know, I have a hope that there shall certainly be, verse 15, Acts 24, 15, a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Now, if I were to ask you, do you believe there's going to be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked? I think all of us would say yes. And then I ask you the next question, what are you going to do about it? Oh, he says, I'm not going to do anything.

I'm just going to wait for it to happen. See, that's where Paul was different from us. He says, I know certainly that there'll be a resurrection one day of the righteous and the wicked.

So, Paul, what are you going to do about it? I'll tell you, verse 16, in view of this, I do my best to always, there again that word, always maintain a conscience which is blameless before God and before man. Always. That is the only proper answer to someone who asks us, what are you doing about this faith that you have that there's going to be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked? How do you make sure you're going to be in the resurrection of the righteous? Just sit back and wait and say, well, 20 years ago I said these few magic words and in about five seconds, Lord Jesus came into my heart.

I tell you, that's not what Paul said. He says, I always keep my conscience absolutely clear because I want to be in the resurrection of the righteous. Don't be fooled by preachers who have not told you the truth about these things.

I want to tell you in Jesus' name, if you want to be in the resurrection of the righteous, you are not wiser than Paul who had revelation from God. He says, I know there'll be a resurrection of the righteous and therefore since I want to be in that, I keep my conscience always, not once in a day in the evening before I go to bed, always, always clear before God and before men. So that's the second prayer we need to pray.

Lord, help me always this year to keep my conscience absolutely clear. Don't think that's a very difficult command. It's something like you're telling your children.

Listen, my little boy, my little girl, every time you get a thorn in your foot, pull it out immediately. Is that a very difficult command? Is that a very difficult instruction to give to your children? As soon as you get a thorn in your foot, pull it out. If you get it 20 times a day, pull it out 20 times a day.

Think of a child walking barefoot in a thorny ground and gets thorns in their foot all the time. You tell him or her, pull it out, pull it out, pull it out. And he says, Daddy, do I have to do it 20 times a day? 50 times a day if necessary because I don't want any thorns in your foot.

God's telling you the same thing. You don't think that's a difficult command. You think that's good for your children.

So Lord, help me to keep my conscience always clear before God and before men. Now one would think that it's easier to go before a sinful man and ask forgiveness than to go before a holy God and ask forgiveness, isn't it? I mean, wouldn't it be more difficult to go before someone whose standard is a million times higher than the standard of ordinary men? Would you like to go before a judge who's very lenient or before a judge who's extremely a million times more strict? I think all of us would say, I don't want to go before a judge who's a million times stricter. I want to go before a lenient judge.

See, that's the difference between God and man. God's standards are a million times higher than any man's. Then, why is it, listen to me, why is it we find it so easy to go and confess to God and so difficult to go and confess to a man who's a million times worse than God? I mean, not worse, but whose standard is lower than God and who's a sinner like us.

I'll tell you why. Listen carefully, because when you confess to God, you are not confessing to God. You're just easing your conscience, confessing to yourself.

You know that many people, when they think they are praying to God, they are praying to themselves. I'll show you an example of that. There was a, Jesus told a story of a Pharisee who went into the temple to pray.

One would think, in those days, the temple was where God's presence was. I mean, today's presence is, he was everywhere, but in those days, the Lord taught them to go to the temple and pray. So we read in Luke chapter 18, there was a Pharisee who went into the temple, and he stood there, Luke 18, verse 11, and he prayed to himself.

Did you notice that phrase? He prayed to himself. But he didn't use his own name. He said, God.

He thought he was praying to God, just like we do when we think we are praying to God. Oh God, Heavenly Father. Here is a verse that Jesus taught us many a time, when you pray, saying, Heavenly Father, oh God, you are praying to yourself.

And that's why your prayers are not answered. Because when you pray to yourself, what can you do? Only what you are capable of doing. And so you find the end result of your prayers is, accomplishes only what you yourself are capable of doing.

Not what God is capable of doing. Because your prayer didn't go to God at all. He prayed to himself.

And I believe that many Christians, when they pray, they are praying to themselves. That's why we find it so difficult to go to a human being and say, Brother, Brother, I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

But we find it so easy to go out and say, oh God, please forgive me. I'm sorry. We are praying to ourselves.

It's very easy to say to yourself, I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I don't know whether we have really learned what it is to go before a holy God and say, Lord, I'm sorry for losing my temper at my husband or my wife.

I tell you, it would bring such fear in you that you'd be scared to do it again. Why is it we're not scared to do it again? We keep on doing it. Because I'll tell you honestly what you probably never thought of or heard of today.

All your prayers were to yourself. And the test of it is this. Can you keep your conscience, like Paul says, clear before men also? I mean, if you've sinned against a human being, you've got to set it right before him.

See the example of Zacchaeus in Luke chapter 19. It says that when Jesus when he faced Jesus Jesus never said a word. He never preached a sermon.

All he said was hey listen, I want to come and stay at your house today. Luke 19 verse 5. Zacchaeus, come down. I want to stay at your house.

That's all. The only sermon was, I want to stay at your house. And I don't know how far it was from that tree to Zacchaeus' house.

Let's say they walked about five minutes. And all during that five minutes Zacchaeus was thinking, I'm going to live in Jesus' presence today. Boy, there's so many things wrong in my life.

How can I live before him? So it says before he entered his house, verse 8, he stopped. I think he stopped at the gate. He said, Lord, hang on.

I want to set something right before you enter my house. That was a man who had met with God. First of all, I want to tell you I've done a lot of wrong things in my life.

I've cheated a lot of people. But I'm not just going to confess it to you. All those whom I cheated I'm going to give back four times.

They'll be so happy that I cheated them because I'm going to get four times back. The people down the street would wish, oh, I wish Zacchaeus had cheated me too. I'm going to make people happy whom I

cheated.

Have you ever made people happy whom you have cheated and wronged? Zacchaeus did it. And he said, there are a whole lot of people whose address I don't even know. I'm not going to conveniently forget it saying, I don't know that address.

You know how people, when they're reluctant to ask forgiveness from somebody, they don't make any effort to find out what their phone number is or their address is. I don't know. Zacchaeus wasn't like that.

He says, I'm going to give that money which I took wrongfully from people to the poor. I can't keep it. And Jesus heard it and he said, boy, verse 9, today salvation has come to this house.

Do you know that in Jesus' entire life he never said those words to anybody else? There was a man who wanted to keep his conscience clear before God and before men. And it was very costly to set it right before men. Think if you have stolen or cheated somebody for a hundred rupees and you want to pay him back four hundred rupees.

Boy. And then another fellow whom you cheated a thousand rupees, you're going to pay him back four thousand rupees. Just think of it practically.

That's costly. That's costly. Zacchaeus did it and Jesus said, this man's really saved.

Do you think Jesus could say that about you? This person's really saved because he's willing to humble himself and acknowledge his fault before men and say, I did wrong to you. I hurt you by what I did, what I said. I want to set it right.

Not just set it right. I want to do everything possible. I want to do four times.

Set it right. And make up in any way possible. I mean, did I tell a false story about you to ten people? I'm going to take the trouble to go to all those ten people.

Zacchaeus cheated a man of money. You tell me. Do you care more for a hundred rupees of yours or your reputation? Which is more valuable to you? Would you rather lose a hundred rupees or your reputation? I hope your answer is, my reputation is more valuable than a hundred rupees.

Well, if you stole somebody's reputation by going around speaking stories about him, it doesn't matter if you did it thirty years ago. Have you gone to those people before whom you stole that man's reputation? Have you gone back and said, I want to take it back. I'm sorry what I said.

I was ignorant. I was foolish. I was stupid.

And I want to take it back. It was wrong. What do we do? You say, oh Lord, please forgive me.

I did those things. You're only praying to yourself. Do you realize why all these years your spiritual life is up and down and up and down in such a low level? Dear brothers, from this year, will you pray? Lord, help me to keep my conscience clear always, immediately, at the earliest opportunity.

And if you're reminded of things right now, I want to tell you in Jesus' name, if you want to start this year right, at the earliest opportunity, set it right. Now, there may be some situations where you can do nothing about it. Well, commit those to God.

But if God, the Holy Spirit, reminds you of something, I would encourage you to set it right, whether it's financial or any other way. May God have mercy on you. The third thing is the thing that a lot of holy Christians speak about, but do very little.

Pray. Luke 18, verse 1. Pray always. Jesus said that.

Pray always. Now, by prayer, prayer is an expression of our dependence upon God. I want to look at it like that.

So, my prayer is, Lord, help me to depend on you always. Help me to depend on you always. Number three.

That is the meaning of praying always. Otherwise, prayer can be a ritual. I mean, you and I know so well that a lot of our prayers are rituals.

I mean, many of us have prayed for something. You wouldn't even know if the answer came, because you don't even remember what you prayed for. Men ought to pray always.

All times. And that's repeated in 1 Thessalonians. I want you to look at 1 Thessalonians in chapter 5. I want to show you three verses about what the Bible says about prayer.

Or four verses, perhaps. 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 18. Sorry.

Verse 17. Pray without ceasing. That means always.

For this is, verse 18, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Again, pray. Now, the reason I'm showing you this is, because most of the books you read on prayer will tell you about some man of God who prayed for two hours a day or four hours a day or six hours a day.

I read those books and I tell you, they never challenged me. They discouraged me. And if you're honest, they'll discourage you too.

The wonderful thing is, the Bible doesn't say that you should pray for four hours a day or six hours a day. Those are all feats. Like some muscular man who could lift so many pounds or something like that.

The Bible says, pray always. Always means 24 hours. Here's the second place where it says that.

Another place is Ephesians 6. You know, when you read Scripture, you get out of your head all these wrong ideas that you get by reading Christian books which have no support in Scripture. Ephesians 6 and verse 18. With all prayer and petition, pray at all times.

Not five minutes, not five hours. Pray at all times in the Spirit. Ephesians 6,18.

And the fourth reference is in the words of Jesus himself in relation to second coming in Luke 21, verse 36. Where Jesus says, keep on the alert at all times praying that you may have strength to escape. Again, it's at all times.

Be on the watch. In James version it says, watch and pray. Watch means be on the alert and pray at all times.

Be on the alert and pray at all times. Now the reason I showed you those four Scriptures is to show you this is the New Testament teaching on how much you should pray. It's not one hour.

It's not two hours. It's not six hours. It's all the time.

Now how in the world can you do it all the time? Does it mean you have to be all the time on your knees? Obviously not. Jesus was not on his knees all the time. He wasn't having his eyes shut all the time, praying to God all the time.

There's only one way that we can pray all the time. And for me, I have taken an example from something else that we do all the time. That's breathing.

If you stop breathing, you die. Breathing is not an effort unless you're sick. And for Jesus, prayer was not an effort.

And when you seek to live that type of life, it's not an effort. It is an effort if somebody tells you, you've got to pray two hours a day. I've never taught people that.

I've said, you must pray all the time. So don't get discouraged by these books of people who pray for six hours a day and four hours a day. They haven't come up to the mark.

They should have been praying 24 hours a day. That's the man I appreciate. The rest is all boasting.

They are all disobeying the one command which Jesus said, if you pray, do it in secret. Don't let anybody know that you did it. How in the world did somebody know this man of God prayed for four hours or six hours? Enough to publish it in a book.

People have asked me this question many times. How much do you pray every day? I say, I'm not going to tell you. You really want an answer? Okay.

24 hours. He's disappointed because that's not the answer he's expecting. It's actually in scripture.

Jesus taught us to pray like that. In other words, what does it mean? I'm not saying we shouldn't have specific times of prayer. By all means.

We all need it. But in addition to that, I find the best time I can do it is early morning when I wake up before getting out of bed. That's the best time.

Have a little time. Pray specific times. Otherwise, this life of perpetual dependence.

Lord, what is prayer actually? Lord, I need your help in this. I need your help in that. To learn to develop this habit of dependence.

I can take an example from the Old Testament circumcision. In the Old Testament, the Lord told the Israelites if anybody is not circumcised, he's not part of Israel. That's it.

You've got to be circumcised. And the meaning of that, everything in the Old Testament had a meaning like the Passover lamb and going through the Red Sea with a picture of baptism, etc. Circumcision means this.

Philippians chapter 3 and verse 3. We don't have to be physically circumcised today, but the spiritual meaning of it is we are the true circumcision, the Holy Spirit says through Paul. That is, we worship God and we put no confidence in the flesh. See, the Old Testament circumcision was a cutting off of the flesh and throwing it away.

And that is the meaning. A cutting off of confidence in our flesh and throwing it away permanently. Those Israelites didn't go and get that piece of flesh and stitch it back sometime.

They threw it away permanently and I must once for all in my life throw away all confidence in myself permanently when it comes to spiritual things. We live in a world where if you want to get a job, they want to see whether you're self-confident. That's OK in your job, brother.

If you want to live a Christian life, you must have no confidence in yourself. The reason why we sin so much is because we have so much confidence in our own ability. And that's why we pray so little.

And the cleverer we are and the richer we are, the more confidence we have in our own ability and that's why such people pray less. Think of your own life. I believe many of you will admit that when you were poorer and more in need, you prayed more.

Now that you've become rich and you have plenty and all that you need, you pray less. It's just a way. Because those days you needed God more.

Now you don't need God so much because you've got a lot of human resources to take care of your needs. So this no confidence in the flesh is what makes us pray. We can develop a habit, for example, I know that if I, for example, I've preached for so many years that I can develop a habit where I don't pray before I come to the meeting.

God have mercy on me if that happens. That which you're very good at, you don't pray about. For example, supposing some of you can't preach for 2 minutes properly, if you were put up here and asked to lead a meeting for half an hour, you'd be praying for about 2-3 weeks before it.

Because you sense you have no confidence. In the conference, for example, if they say, next year you're going to be in charge of the cooking. Boy, I'd really pray.

I'd start praying this year. Because that's something that scares me. I have absolutely no confidence in myself when it comes to that.

And I want people to come back the next year after eating my cooking. My point is, I'm just giving you an example. The area where you have no confidence, you really pray.

The areas where you think you're pretty smart and capable, that's where you don't pray. So there's a close connection. Dependence on the Lord, because I have no confidence in my own ability to live this Christian life.

But it's something we have to develop. Lord, help me this year to live a life of dependence on you always. In the things of the Spirit, in the things of God, to have no confidence in myself.

Even in some area where I've experienced your help tremendously, to pray, pray. Even if you have brought up your children wonderfully. Have you stopped praying for them now? I don't.

My wife and I pray for them every day. So, you know, prayer is dependent on no confidence in our flesh and a helpless dependence, that attitude of helpless dependence on God for every little thing. Lord, help me to develop that.

The number four. A fourth habit that we can ask God to help us for in this year is Philippians 4 and verse 4. Again, the word always. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, just like all those other commands. I've set the Lord before me always and I keep a good conscience always. I depend on the Lord and pray always.

I need to rejoice in the Lord always. All these are dependent on others. You know, like, for example, we read in Acts chapter 2 right at the beginning.

I've set the Lord always before me. Therefore, my heart rejoices. If you don't do that, you won't be able to rejoice always.

I mean, if you set men before you always, or your enemies, or the devil. I tell you, the number of times I've heard Christians blame the devil for things he never did. Because the devil is so big.

The electricity goes and says, oh, the devil did it. He didn't do it. The electricity board slipped up somewhere and they did it.

Or something else goes wrong and you don't obey the laws of the body. You eat too much and you get sick and say the devil made you sick. The devil didn't make you sick.

You made yourself sick because you ate too much. A lot of things. We say the devil did this and the devil did that.

He didn't do it at all. Because you made the devil so big. Jesus is so small.

He can't help you. Now we've got to change that. We are going to rejoice in the Lord always.

And the reason is because we read in Romans 8 28. See, I can't rejoice if something happening to me is going to hurt me and ruin me. But can you rejoice if something happens to you which is good? For example, supposing you were called up before your boss tomorrow and he's going to raise your pay four times.

Are you going to feel sad? Are you going to rejoice? Or supposing he says he's going to give you two promotions, not just one. Are you going to rejoice? Those things are good. That happens to you.

Or that pretty girl you always wanted to marry. Finally she said yes. You know, it's going to rejoice.

When you realize that something good has happened, you rejoice. But here is a wonderful verse, Romans 8 28. We know that God causes all things.

Not just some things. All. All means all.

Things to work for your good. Not for everybody. Hang on.

Just make sure the money order is in your name. Those who love God. You can't love God in money.

You can't love God in this world. Those who love God say, Lord, I want to love you with all my heart. And we're called according to his purpose.

His purpose, we read in verse 29, is to make us like Jesus. I want to tell everyone sitting here, whoever you are, if you want to love God with all your heart, that means obey the first commandment. And your purpose in life is not to be a great person in this world or to make a lot of money.

But to become like Jesus. More this year than you have ever been in your whole life. In addition, if he gives you money, job, and 101 things, which he often does, that's secondary.

But your mind is not taken up with that. You're going to be like Jesus. If you love God and you're called according to his purpose, here's a wonderful promise.

Every single thing that anybody will ever do to you will work for your good. I can say that after having been a believer for 51 years. In these 51 years, a lot of people have tried to do me harm.

Instigated by the devil, of course, because I serve the Lord. It has never done me harm till today. Not one of those things.

The mistakes doctors have made on me when they did surgery on me didn't do me any harm. The evil that other people schemed and planned to do for me without my knowledge never did me any harm. It made me a better Christian.

I'm not a salesperson trying to sell a verse to you. I'm not interested. I'm telling you before God the absolute truth.

Because one of the things that I'm thankful for is early in my life, I realized that the only life worth living on Earth was one lived totally for Christ. I realized that when I was 21. I hope you 21-year-olds will realize that.

And I can say in all these 50 years, nobody's ever been able to harm me. They tried. Didn't succeed.

Not only they didn't harm me, the harm worked for good. Always, always, always, always. And I'll tell you something.

I faced a lot more things than probably any of you have faced. Because the devil targets God's servants to harm them in some way, to spoil their reputation, to write all types of stories about them. Do you know the number of books and articles and Christian newspaper articles that have been written against me in so many parts of India? Doesn't bother me.

It's worked for my good. Made me a stronger man. I remember the early days when I used to stand in the streets in Cochin and preach the gospel and people would laugh at me and make fun of me and call me the devil and all.

It gave me a backbone spiritually. Did they harm me? No. They made me a stronger Christian.

If you can love an enemy, it makes you a stronger Christian. Every single thing, I praise God for this verse. If you love God, he'll make everything work for your good.

It's been one of my favorite verses for many, many years. I want to encourage you to believe it because then nobody will have to prompt you to rejoice. I don't have to say to myself, oh, I'm supposed to rejoice always.

Let me try and rejoice. It's like, you know, as I told you, you've got to hike in your pay tomorrow four times of what you're earning right now and then you say to yourself, hey, what am I supposed to do now? Rejoice, right? Okay, I'm going to rejoice. You have to say that.

It's automatic. If it's not automatic, it's not really rejoicing. If you have to remind yourself, think of somebody who's not been married and had no children for ten years and they suddenly have a baby.

You have to tell them, hey, you're supposed to rejoice now. You don't have to tell them anything. Rejoicing is spontaneous, automatic.

If it's not automatic, you're trying to legalistically obey some verse. Oh, it says in Philippians 4.4, okay, Lord, I will try and rejoice always. That's not it.

It'll be spontaneous and automatic when you believe that all things work for your good. And I'll tell you something else. If you say that something in your life that somebody did did not work for your good, somebody spoiled a plan you had made for yourself, bungled it up, some government authority or some other authority bungled up something you wanted to do, frustrated your plan, delayed you from accomplishing what you wanted to do or something like that, what you're saying is, I don't really love God.

I have no interest in becoming like Christ. Only for such people things work for evil. Do you know what you're confessing at that moment when you don't rejoice? I don't love God.

Hey, fellas, I want you to know I don't love God. That's why I'm pretty gloomy right now. I want you to know my aim in life is not to be Christ-like.

That's why I'm gloomy right now. Because if you loved God and your purpose was the same as God's purpose to become like Christ, you mean Romans 8.28 is not true? It would work for your good. It's logic.

Then if it was working for your good, why don't you rejoice? Do you have a difficult wife or a difficult husband? Love them. Do you believe that that'll work for your good? It'll make you a much finer Christian than that person who's got a wonderful wife. But have you seen it that way? No.

You spent all your life complaining about your difficult husband or difficult wife. That's why you're so miserable and gloomy. Why not see, Lord, I'm going to love you with all my heart.

I want to be like Christ. I don't want to have a happy, comfortable life at home. I want to be like Jesus.

That's all. Everything will work for your good. Nobody will have to exhort you to rejoice always.

It will rejoice always. Yes, if you lose your job or some other thing happens, Lord, I love you. All I need to check up is, do I love God? Am I called according to His purpose? Do I want to be like Christ? Then I'm sure God's going to make it work for my good.

Number five, 2 Corinthians 4.10. Again, we have a wonderful example in Paul. He says about himself, again the word always, always bearing in my body, caring about my body, the dying of Jesus. That's not the physical crucifixion because, first of all, most Christians, 99.999% of Christians never got crucified

physically.

So what is this dying of Jesus? This is one of the great mysteries of the New Testament, which you never hear about in most churches. There was a dying that Jesus had for 33 and a half years in his life. When he said, take up the cross and follow me daily, he meant daily.

And how can I follow him daily if he didn't take up the cross daily himself? What did he say? If anyone will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. That means he was doing it himself. There was a cross in the life of Jesus every single day of his life.

That's called the dying of Jesus. Right from the time he was a little boy, he died. He died means died to his own will.

And one of the simplest ways I've understood the daily dying is my will crosses God's will. There's a cross. This is God's will and this is my will and my will crosses it.

Either I do God's will or my will. And on that cross, if I die, I can do God's will. There can be numerous situations when Jesus was a little boy, when he wanted to do something.

You know how our little children want to do something and daddy and mommy says do something else. And the Bible says honor your father and mother. Jesus said, okay, I'll die to what I want to do.

He's a little seven-year-old boy saying I'll die to what I want to do and I'll do what mommy says. That's how he lived. When people made fun of him in school, hey, we here, nobody knows who your father is, Jesus.

Uh-huh. They say we know your mother, but we don't know your father. Imagine if your child faced that in school, frequently being teased that nobody knows who your dad is.

What do you think Jesus said? They didn't know the truth. They didn't know that he was born of a virgin. He suffered and he kept quiet.

He just smiled at them and loved them. Of course, he was explaining to them my mother was a virgin when I was born. They wouldn't believe it in any case.

Do you know what a lot Jesus suffered? He never tells us about these things. How do I know? The Holy Spirit will show us the secret things. There are many, many things that Jesus went through in his life that the Holy Spirit will show us to encourage us, saying, don't think Jesus didn't face it before you.

He faced it. Everything that you go through, he faced it. He died.

All through his life, he died. When people spoke evil of him and called him Beelzebub, he said, I'm an ordinary man. I forgive you.

His whole life, he was just dying to himself. At the end of John chapter 7, when after finishing his message, nobody invited him home to sleep. He went and slept on the Mount of Olives.

We read there under the trees. He didn't feel sorry for himself. Nobody has invited me home.

Nobody even asked me, where are you sleeping tonight? He never once felt sorry for himself. He had no tears for his own griefs. When you die to yourself, you have no tears for your own griefs.

Those of you who are weeping for your own sorrows and problems and griefs, I want to tell you in Jesus' name, you are not following Jesus. You are following the world full of people who weep and try to get sympathy from people for their sorrows. Can you imagine Jesus going and trying to get sympathy from people? You know, when his soul was troubled, he would tell people, pray with me.

He didn't go to Peter and James and so on. Don't you feel sorry for me? Oh, people are treating me. Not at all.

He said, come and pray with me. My soul is troubled. Pray with me.

That's a good thing. Let's go to God about it. He never asked people to sympathize with his sorrows and his trials.

He had no tears for his own griefs. He died. There are numerous situations like that we can face in life.

The answer is, my brother, die to yourself. When your reputation is taken away, when your people are trying to take advantage of you, die. Then number six, this is very important and one of the most difficult things, but it's possible by the grace of God.

Colossians 4 Colossians 4 and verse 6 says, Let your speech always be with grace as though seasoned with salt. It's a beautiful picture. As soon as you put a little bit of food in your mouth, immediately you know whether there's salt in it or not.

It doesn't take time. It doesn't even take a second. As soon as it touches your tongue, you know there's not enough salt.

And here salt is compared with grace. You know how good food tastes when there's salt in it and how bland it tastes when there is no salt. It says your speech should be like that.

That when people hear it, they say, hey, there's some grace about this. Not when we preach in the pulpit. That's easy.

But it's not easy for some even in the pulpit. But here it says all the time. All the time.

You must have a reputation that you're a person, you may stand true to God's truths firmly, but your speech is always with grace. It's a habit. You don't learn to swim overnight.

You don't learn to play the piano overnight. You can't learn calculus overnight. And you can't learn to speak with grace overnight.

But if you work at it, you can learn to swim. You can learn to play the piano. You can learn calculus.

I suppose you can learn the theory of relativity too if you work at it. And you can learn to speak with grace. It takes time.

Say, Lord, I'm going to plunge into the river and I'm going to learn. It's not been like that in these past years. Say, Lord, it's not been like that in these past years.

My wife and my husband will tell me straight away, it's not been like that. But they're going to have a different testimony at the end of this year. Not that I've become perfect.

But I can play the piano a little bit now. I've learned to speak a little more graciously this year. Ask your wife.

Ask a maidservant in your house. They are even better than your wife. Your wife will be scared to tell you the truth perhaps.

But a maidservant will tell you whether you speak graciously or not. The children. Let your speech always be with grace.

Always. Do you believe there are such verses in Scripture? Just like food with salt. Number seven.

The last one. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse, the last verse, verse 58. 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Don't be sluggish in doing something for the Lord who gave his life for you. Meditate on how much Jesus went through to save you.

I do that often. Even now. I say Lord I always want to be abounding in the work of the Lord.

I don't want to say I've got an ache here and I've got a pain there and it's raining and it's not convenient. I don't want to say all that anymore. The things that you've said for so many years.

Always some excuse. You know there's a verse in Proverbs which says the lazy man says there's a lion in the streets. That's why I'm not going out today.

It's amazing what all lazy people can think of. A lion in the streets? That's why I'm not going out today. There's always an excuse for a lazy man who doesn't want to do what he's supposed to do.

It's not convenient. I don't have a gift. Oh brother Zach has got a gift.

I don't have that gift. Somebody else has got a gift. No it's not a gift.

They love Jesus because Jesus gave his life for them. They want to say Lord what can I do to return to repay you? Just sing songs on Sunday morning? No I want to do something for you Lord. Show me what I should do.

Show me what I can do with my energy, my home, my money, my time. So many things you've given me. I want to abound.

Not just give a little teaspoon. Do you understand that word like that? Giving a teaspoon. Always abounding.

I want to be abounding. People must see you as always. You may not have the gift somebody else has but you can do something for the Lord.

If you're a part of the body of Christ. If you're not a part of the body of Christ then be a part of the body of Christ first. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord. God will help you and show you what you should do. I want to put all those things on the screen now.

So that you can see it. Before you and remember them. Seven new your prayers.

Number one. Lord help me to set you before my face always. Number two.

Lord help me to keep a good conscience always. Three. Lord help me to depend on you which is the same as pray.

Always. Number four. Lord help me to rejoice always.

Number five. Lord help me to die to myself always. Six.

Lord help me to speak graciously always. And number seven. Lord help me to serve you wholeheartedly always.

Let's pray. Lord we believe that you're expecting much from each of us this year. Just like we expect much from our children when they go to school.

Just like a company expects much from someone whom they pay a hundred thousand rupees a month to. We believe that you expect from us. Many times in the past you've been disappointed.

But in Jesus name Father we pray that it will be better this year. We're not going to be perfect in one year. But we want to make more progress this year towards perfection in these areas than it's ever been true in our life so far.

Our prayer is not that we're making a resolution Lord. We're asking you to help us. It's a prayer.

Lord help us in these areas. The things that your word has said we must do always. 24 hours a day.

365 days of the year. Help us to do it. In Jesus name.

Amen.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/yC9laXNj-dQ.mp4>

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